NEW

HISTORY OF ASTROLOGY

THE STORY OF THE ANCIENT ART OF FORETELLING

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Digital Edition

FUTURE

FOURTH EDITION

From the makers of ALL ABOUT HISTORY

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Welcome

Is your fate written in the stars?

For centuries, humanity has turned to the heavens to make sense of the world here on Earth. From weather forecasting to auguries of destiny, we have always looked to the stars and planets to guide us.

In *History of Astrology* you'll discover the long and complex story of this ancient art, from its roots in Mesopotamian antiquity to its popularity today. Explore how sages, scientists and charlatans throughout the ages used their knowledge of celestial secrets to predict everything from natural disasters to the fortunes of kings. Learn how astrologers today interpret the movements and patterns of planets and stars to gain insights into personality traits, and the wealth of centuries' worth of theory, legend, and history that they draw on to make predictions about the future.

FUTURE

HISTORY OF ASTROLOGY

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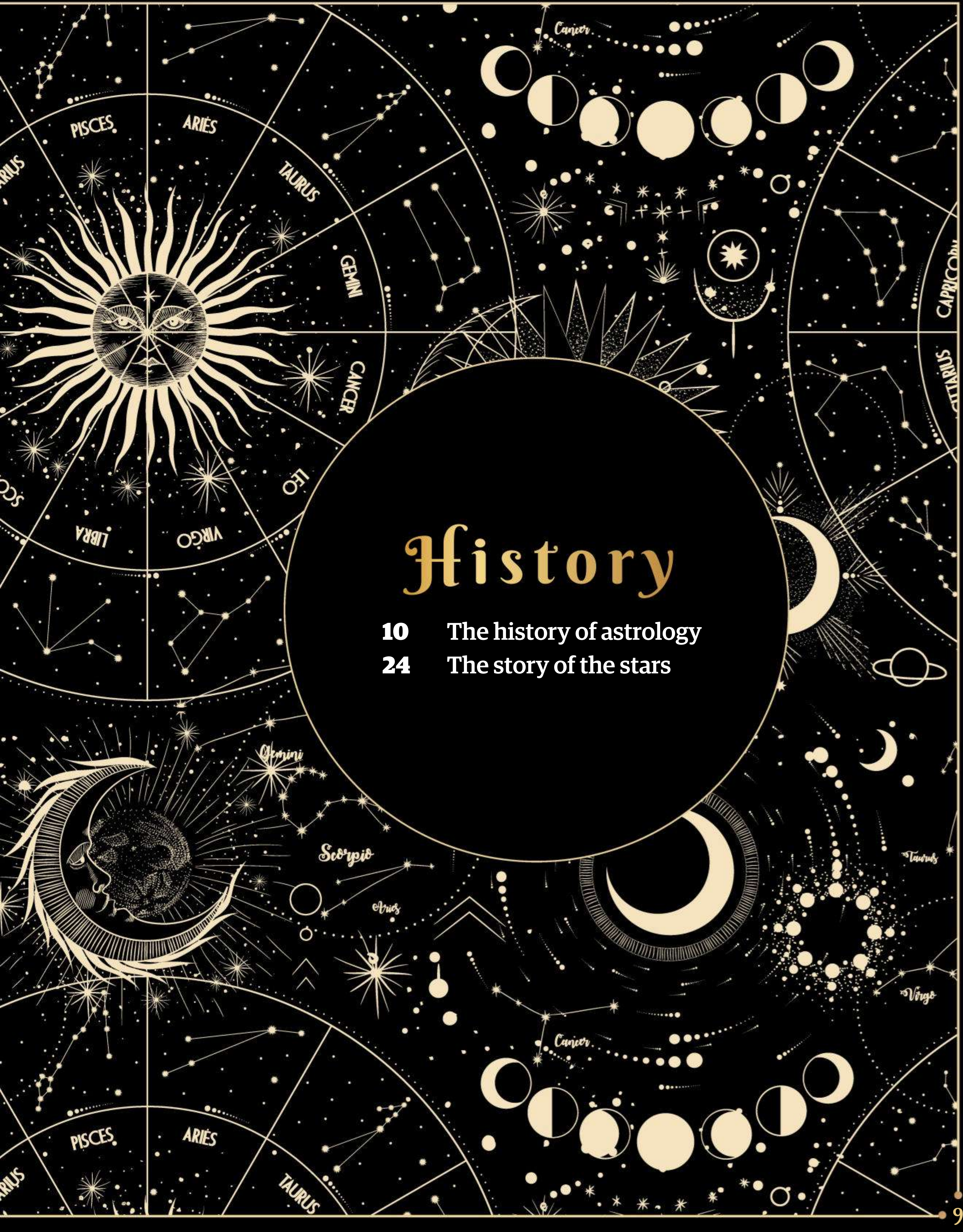
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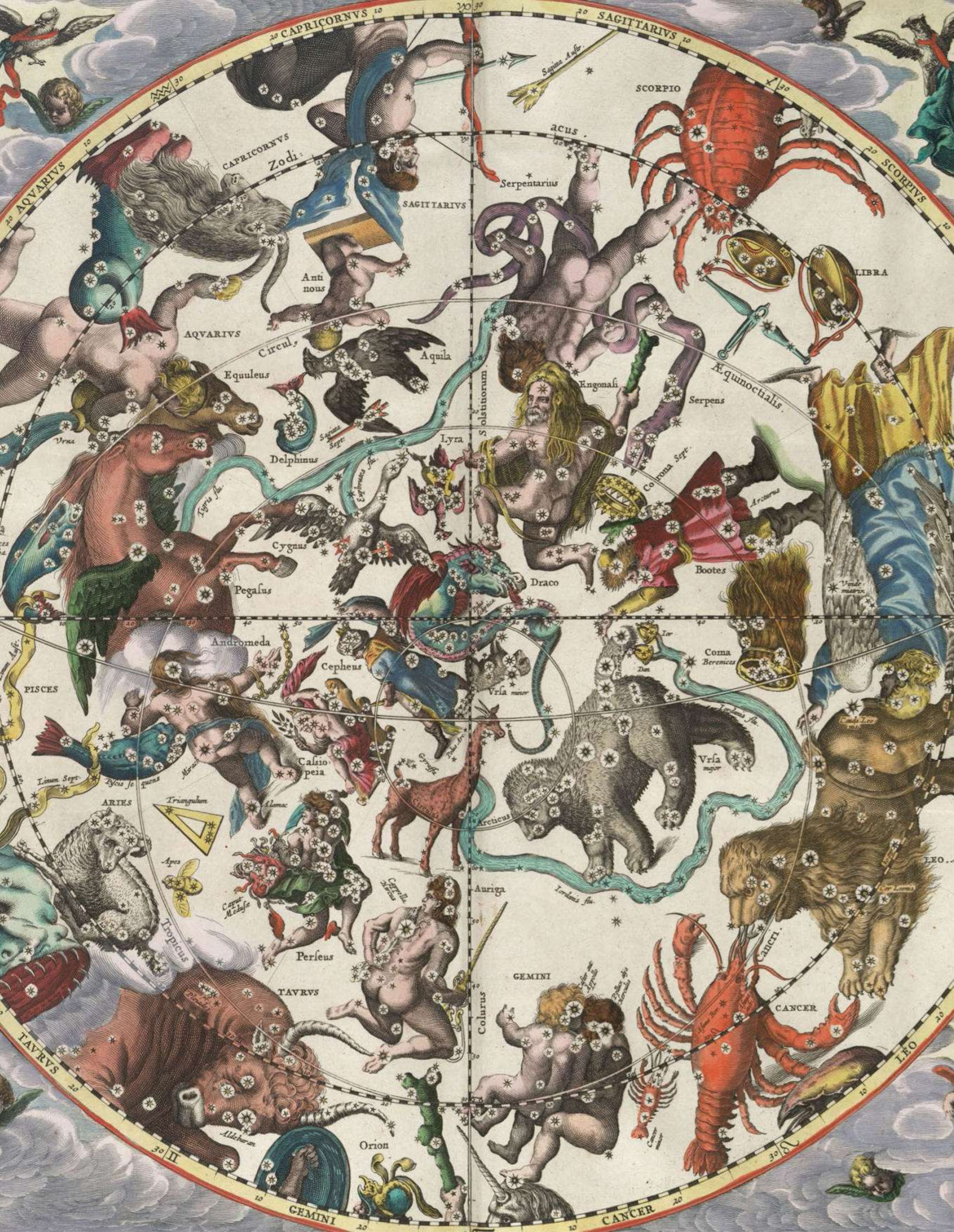
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Draco
Bootes
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Aldebaran
Orion
TAVRVS
GEMINI
CANCER
LEO

The history of astrology

Humans have always sought to understand the heavens and how they influence the course of events

Written by Ben Gazur

Astrology is one of the oldest of the sciences. Since time out of mind people have noticed the changes in the night sky, whether they vary over a month, a season or a year. Some linked the changes in weather and length of day to those mirrored in the heavens. At the dawn of humanity there was no difference between what we call astronomy and the art of astrology.

Humans have always looked up at the stars and wondered. No one can say when the first person stared at the heavens and saw images in the myriad points of light, but it was certainly before the invention of writing. Humans are animals hardwired to find patterns and some evidence has been found of prehistoric humans recording what they saw in the sky.

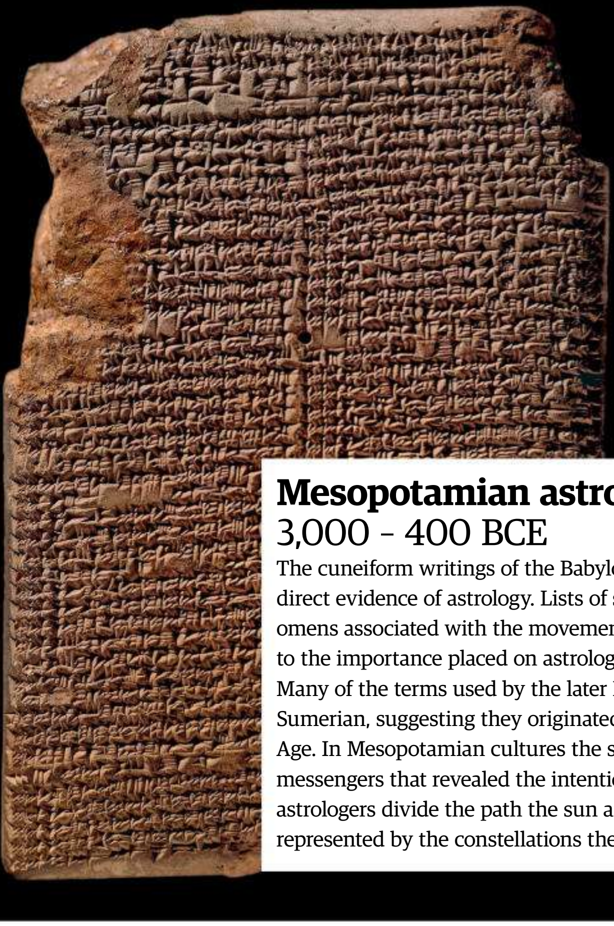
> Horary astrology looks at the sky at the time you ask a question to give you a reading like tarot cards

A small plaque made from mammoth ivory dating from 30,000 BCE has been found that shows a human figure standing in a pose that makes some researchers think it represents the constellation Orion. Others have identified cave paintings of a similar age with other constellations like Taurus.

Astrology developed directly out of our ancestors' desire to know the will of the gods and understand the workings of the universe. This has not left us. Today we separate astronomy from astrology. Scientists have mapped the heavens in unimaginable detail and probes have visited every planet. Astrology has sometimes been cast as a superstitious throwback to less enlightened times, but there are still millions who believe that it has something to teach us. Knowledge of the future or of ourselves can be gleaned from the precise data that astronomers have revealed. Astronomy and astrology will always walk hand in hand.

The history of astrology is a history of the human urge to know more about the universe and some of history's greatest minds have cast their horoscopes in hopes of glimpsing their fates.

Timeline of astrology



Mesopotamian astrology

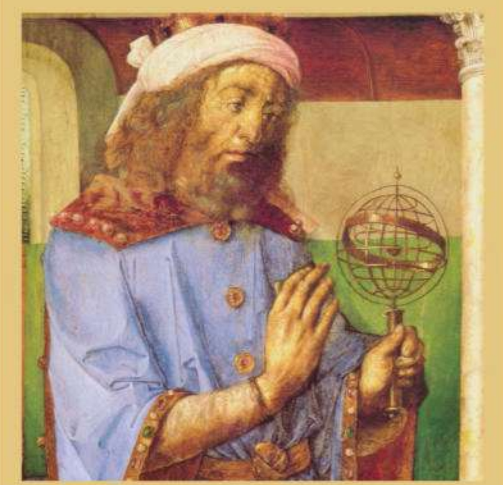
3,000 – 400 BCE

The cuneiform writings of the Babylonians contain the earliest direct evidence of astrology. Lists of star names, positions, and omens associated with the movements of the heavens speak to the importance placed on astrology by the Babylonians. Many of the terms used by the later Babylonians are in ancient Sumerian, suggesting they originated in the early Bronze Age. In Mesopotamian cultures the stars and planets acted as messengers that revealed the intentions of their gods. Babylonian astrologers divide the path the sun and stars follow into 12 parts, represented by the constellations they passed through.

Ptolemaic revolution

2nd century CE

The Alexandrian astrologer Ptolemy creates a new system of astronomy where the planets move in various spheres. He believes that the movements of the stars and planets have a natural influence on all creatures. His great work on astrology, the *Tetrabiblos*, remains influential for centuries and gives intellectual respectability to the art. Ptolemy argues that astrology is simply another method of studying and understanding the world. He references the effects the stars could have on people's health and psychology. Individual horoscopes could be cast based on the date of birth and the current positions of celestial bodies.



Prehistoric stars

30,000 – 10,000 BCE

Cave paintings and images carved on mammoth ivory may represent the earliest depictions of the constellations. Ancient structures are sometimes built to align with the sun at specific times of the year.

Vedic astrology

1000 BCE

Indian astrology develops from a need to create an accurate calendar to time the performance of rituals. This system evolves to allow for predictions of personal horoscopes as the heavens reflect a person's karma.

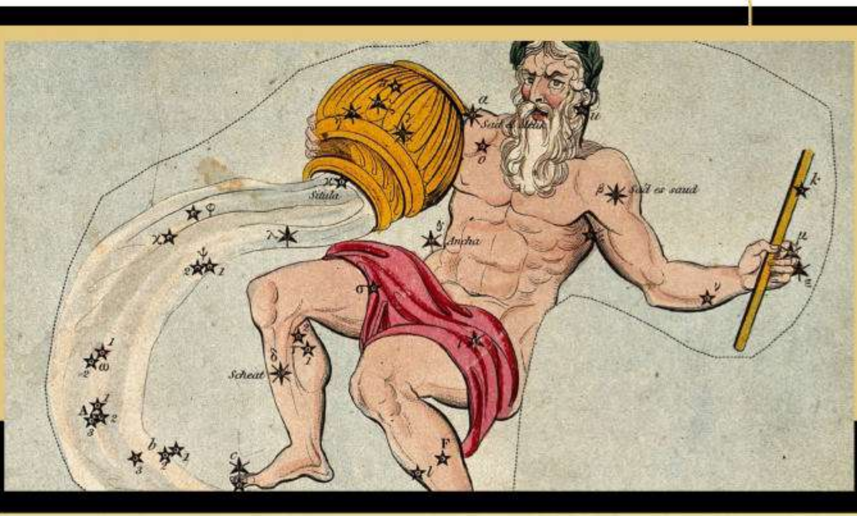
30,000 BCE **10,000 BCE** **3000 BCE** **1000 BCE** **2ND CENTURY CE**

Star charts 1534 BCE

The predictable motions of the stars and planets allow precise dating of ancient star charts. The tomb of Senmut, vizier to Queen Hatshepsut, contains a star chart showing the night sky in May 1534 BCE.

Arabic astrology 700 – 1200 CE

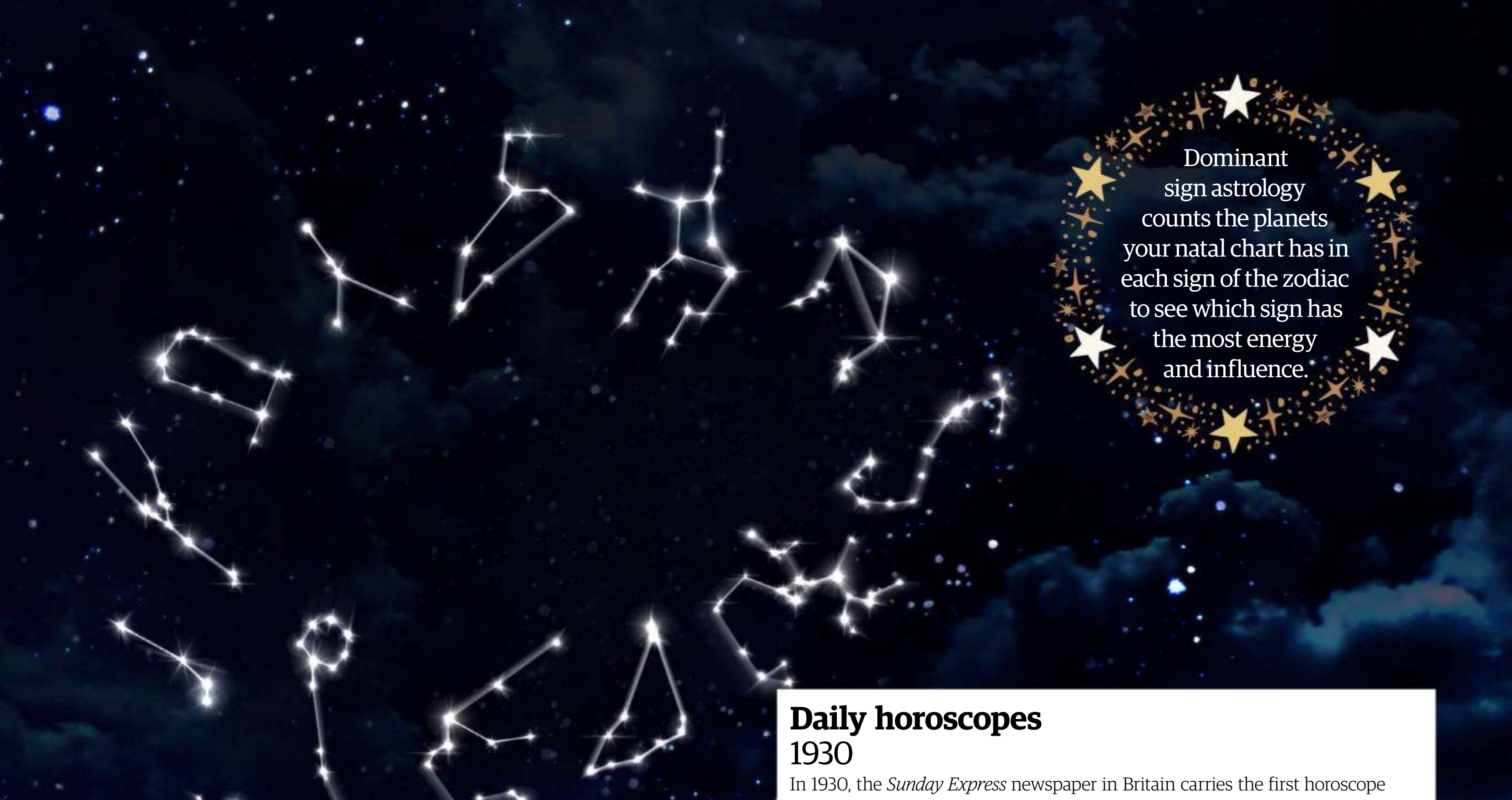
The works of Greek astrology are translated into Arabic and influence generations of thinkers. Many Islamic courts give important positions to astrologers. The timing of the founding of Baghdad is decided by casting a horoscope.



Greek astrology

4th century BCE

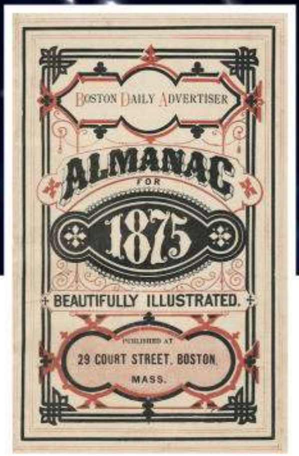
In the wake of Alexander the Great's conquests, the Greeks are influenced by Babylonian astrology. The Greeks are the first to examine the position of the planets at the time of a person's birth.



Dominant sign astrology counts the planets your natal chart has in each sign of the zodiac to see which sign has the most energy and influence.

Daily horoscopes
1930

In 1930, the *Sunday Express* newspaper in Britain carries the first horoscope column. Each week, astrologer RH Naylor writes 12 horoscopes for his articles called "What the Stars Foretell". He innovates by dividing people up into their 'sun signs' – the sign of the zodiac where the Sun was on their birthday. This allows him to create horoscopes for more than a single individual. Soon many publications carry horoscopes based on this system. Many trained astrologers disapprove of this simplified horoscope casting, but its popularity has continued to the current day, with millions checking their daily horoscope.



Boston Daily Advertiser
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Victorian esoterics
19th century

Almanacs that contain astrological predictions for the coming year are bestsellers. An increase in Spiritualism is matched by a belief that the stars can be read to understand their influence on the human world.

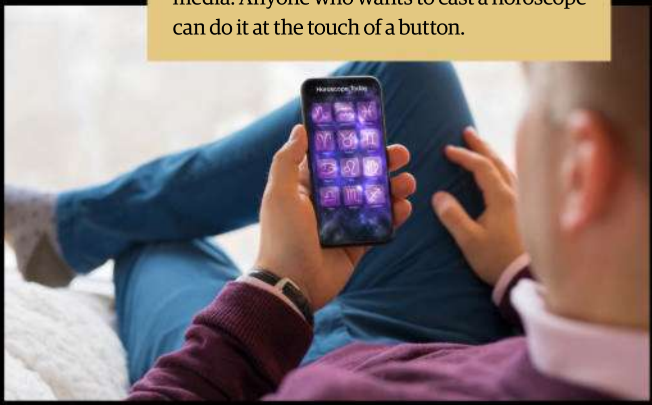
13TH CENTURY — 16TH CENTURY — 19TH CENTURY — 1930 — 2000

Renaissance plotters 16th century

Astrologers are found in the courts of popes and royalty; for example, Elizabeth I of England consults John Dee. Many notable astronomers like Galileo, Brahe and Kepler earn money by casting horoscopes for their patrons.

Social media sensation
2000

Today is a golden age for astrology. The popularity of horoscopes and psychological astrology has found a natural home on social media. Anyone who wants to cast a horoscope can do it at the touch of a button.



Christian astrologers
13th century

Despite official condemnation by the Catholic Church, many kings and nobles keep astrologers in their retinues. Guido Bonatti works for the Holy Roman Emperor and writes an influential textbook on astrology.

Natal astrology looks at the sky on the date, time and place you were born. This is how the signs and houses in your horoscope are assigned

Mesopotamian religion was filled with divine animals and imagery that were also to be found in the constellations first identified by astrologers

Babylonian history of astrology

The oldest texts in the world refer to the divine influence that is reflected in the movements of the night sky

Ancient Sumer produced one of mankind's earliest writing systems in its wedge-shaped cuneiform. In it is an eight-pointed star symbol that is used to designate the sky, the heavens, and also the gods. It seems that from the earliest times, people associated stars with divinities and spirits, and the successor societies of Mesopotamia continued to link stars with gods.

In a series of clay tablets known as the *Enuma Anu Enlil*, there are 7,000 celestial events that are charted. These were not merely recordings of the events in the night sky as each observation was linked with a prediction. People were using the heavens to interpret events on the Earth.

A typical entry in the *Enuma Anu Enlil* might say something like: "The Plough is for starting the furrow... The Fox is for breaking into houses." By looking at the sky and noting when the Plough (or modern Triangulum) constellation first appears in the heavens, farmers would know it was time to start planting their crops. Other stars of constellations, like the Fox, might mean a time of disorder or criminality.

This collection of astrological interpretations was of special importance to the Mesopotamian kings. Copies of the *Enuma Anu Enlil* have been found from across a span of centuries. Scribes for the king copied it multiple times so that it could be called on to understand the signs of heaven. Officials would make observations of the night sky and report them to the monarch. One, Mar-Issar, wrote a letter to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, to tell his liege of the portentous movements of Jupiter.

Having told the king that Jupiter, called Neberu by the Assyrians, was five days late in making an appearance, Mar-Issar consulted the *Enuma Anu Enlil* and passed on the advice given in the tablets. "If Neberu drags: the gods will get angry, righteousness will be put to shame, bright things will become dull, clear things confused; rains and floods will cease, grass will be beaten down, all the countries will be thrown into confusion; the gods will not listen to prayers, nor will they accept supplications, nor will they answer the queries of the haruspices."

The dire nature of this heavenly warning is exactly why Mesopotamian societies became such exacting observers of the heavens. The star catalogues created by the Babylonians listed dozens of stars and constellations that could be read for signs and portents. One text, the *MUL.APIN*, was created around 1000 BCE and gives a complete map of the stars Babylonian astrologers had to take note of.

By observing the stars, the Babylonians had noticed that it takes 365 days for the Sun to make one complete circuit of the heavens. They split this year into 12 months with 30 days each, with an extra 5 days. The Babylonians paid close attention to the motion of the wandering stars and planets, tracking their movements against the time of year. If a planet did not appear at the correct time based on their calculations, it was a divine sign that must be heeded.

> Mundane astrology looks at cycles and patterns in the sky over time and throughout history to predict the course of world events

These astrological observations could be incredibly detailed and were preserved over long periods. One tablet, known as the 'Venus tablet of Ammisaduqa', records the movements of the planet Venus. It is thought that it was first written down around 1700 BCE, but copies have been found from over 1,000 years later. By studying the movement of Venus, astrologers could predict everything from love affairs breaking up to whether the gods would be merciful.

The Babylonians may have associated their gods with the stars and planets, but they did not believe the planets were literally gods. Instead, the planets acted as messengers for the gods, who used their travel through the sky to signal their intents to humanity. Neberu, or Jupiter, was known as Marduk's Star. As Marduk was the chief god of Babylon and linked directly to kingship, the movements of Jupiter were particularly important to Babylonian monarchs.

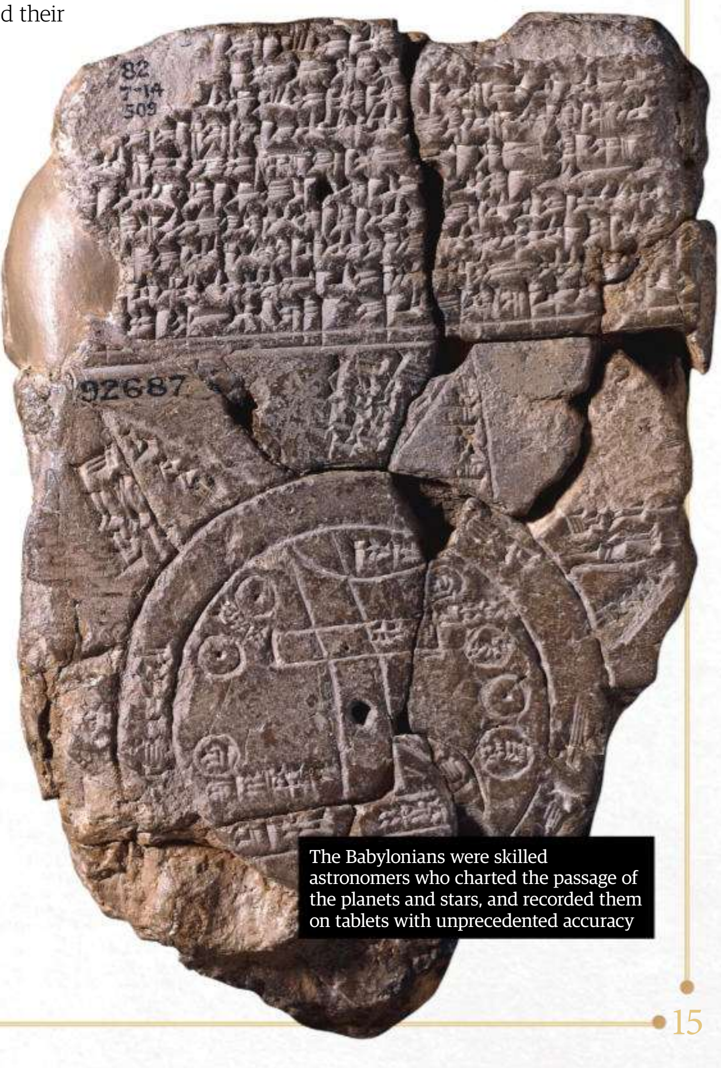
It was from ancient Babylonian observations that the modern zodiac seems to have first developed. Their star catalogues noted the constellations that the Moon moved through in its monthly journey across the sky. This path is also that followed by the sun on its yearly travels and is today known as the ecliptic. The constellations on the ecliptic are those that form the zodiac.

The Babylonians identified several of the constellations that are still recognised today, but they often pictured them very differently. Virgo, for instance, was called the Furrow. The identification of constellations with fitting images allowed people living in an agricultural society to keep track of the passage of the year. The Furrow was linked to the goddess Shala, responsible for grain. Her appearance in the sky was a sign that the time for planting had arrived.

Astrological interpretation entered almost every aspect of Mesopotamian life. Medicine was prescribed based on the position of the sun and moon. When it was a propitious time for Cancer, you may find a doctor anointing you with crab blood. Under the Great Twins, a rooster's wing might be rubbed on you.

Symbols we still associate with the zodiac can be found on seal cylinders from the Akkadian and Elamite kingdoms. These seals were rolled over clay to depict an image, often depicting bulls, scorpions, gods with hunting bows, and goat-fish hybrids that made their way into modern astrology.

The fall of Babylon and the rise of the Median Empire saw a dispersal of Mesopotamian astronomical and astrological knowledge throughout the Near East. The conquests of the Chaldeans who ruled in Babylon would see astrology travelling even further.

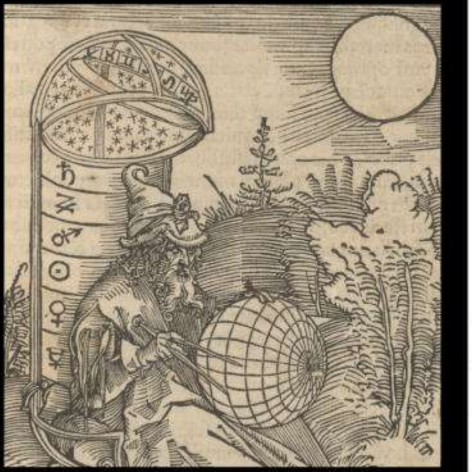

The Babylonians were skilled astronomers who charted the passage of the planets and stars, and recorded them on tablets with unprecedented accuracy

Jewish astrology

The Hebrew Bible is clear that astrology should not be practiced. Leviticus 19:26 says: "You shall not practice divination or soothsaying." Yet observations of the heavens were clearly known. In the Book of Job, God is called "the maker of the Bear and Orion" and the powerlessness of humans is underlined with the question "can you loosen Orion's belt?" The book of Isaiah calls astrologers 'star-gazers' and predicts they will come to a bad end.

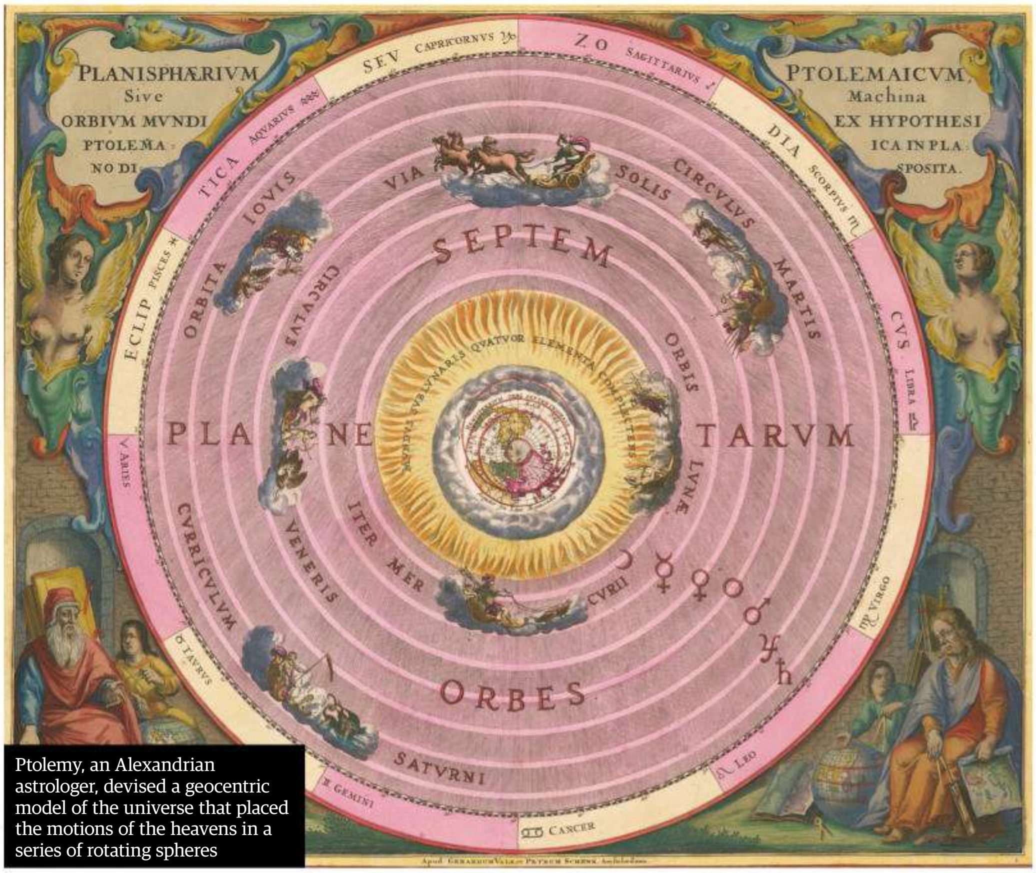
Those who do use astrology are called Chaldeans by the Jews, and this probably stems from their time in captivity in Babylon after the conquest of Judaea by Nebuchadnezzar II. The Chaldean Babylonians were certainly skilled astrologers. There were traditions within Judaism, though, that recognised astrology. The ancient Jewish historian Josephus says that Seth, son of Adam, was the first to study the heavens and had his knowledge recorded on pillars that survived into Josephus' own day.

The legitimacy of astrological predictions was heavily debated by Jewish thinkers for centuries, but some became great figures in astrology. Mashallah, for instance, served as court astrologer to the Abbasid caliph in the 8th century. His works on astrology were hugely influential in later centuries throughout Europe and the Middle East.


The Jewish astrologer Mashallah served in the Muslim court of the Abbasid Caliphate and cast the horoscope that decided the founding of Baghdad

Astrology in the classical world

The Greeks and Romans built on earlier traditions to develop an astrological system that allowed for the casting of personal horoscopes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Apud GERARDUM VALK et PETRUM SCHENK, Amstelodami.

Ptolemy, an Alexandrian astrologer, devised a geocentric model of the universe that placed the motions of the heavens in a series of rotating spheres

According to the Ancient Greek historian Herodotus, astrology, or something like it, entered the Greek world via Egypt. "Each month and day belong to one of the gods, and according to the day of one's birth are determined how one will fare and how one will end and what one will be like; those Greeks occupied with poetry exploit this." While Herodotus is known to have got many things wrong in his anthropological studies, in this he may have been right.

The ancient Egyptians did indeed study the heavens for signs and use the date of a person's birth to map their future. The tomb of Pharaoh Ramesses VI contained a list of stars and constellations as well as the proper way to observe them. From this, a star clock could work out which god was in ascendancy and how that might influence the lives of mortals.

Many Greek thinkers recognised the intellectual achievements of the Egyptians. Biographies of philosophers like Thales, Solon and Plato often mention a period spent in Egypt where they were taught secrets and mathematics by the priests. Plato records how the Egyptians viewed Greeks as upstarts and newcomers when it came to studying higher matters. One tells a visitor: "O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children."

It seems likely, then, that astrology entered the Greek world from Egypt, but the Greeks at first seem to have been more interested in astronomy. The Pre-Socratic philosophers preferred to discuss what matter made up the stars rather than what import they may have had in our daily lives. Plato, in his work *Timaeus*, gives a detailed cosmology that discusses the movements of the stars, planets, sun and moon. Plato also suggests that the stars were placed in the heavens so that mankind could look at them, see patterns, and so develop a concept of geometry.

The Greek fondness for astronomy, however, set the basis for the development of astrology in the Hellenistic world. Following the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great, a great deal of knowledge of Babylonian astrology entered the Greek world. Having accurately charted the movements of the planets, Greek astrologers were able to create horoscopes of unrivaled detail. That human affairs could be read from the predictable motion of the heavens fitted well with the Greek idea of inescapable fates.

In the aftermath of the collapse of Alexander's empire, the Egyptian city of Alexandria became one of the centres of learning in the ancient world. Here Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek thought mixed, sparking new works. Many of the oldest works of this Hellenistic astrology reference the work of Hermes Trismegistus, a mythical sage. According to tradition, it was he who created horoscopes by dividing the sky into 12 sections and noting the position of the planets at the moment of a person's birth.

The Romans were a thoroughly practical people and would use any source they had to gain an advantage. Roman religion is full of omens and rituals to divine the will of the gods. The Roman conquest of Greece and Egypt brought Greek-educated astrologers to Rome, causing astrology to become very popular, if also controversial and politically dangerous.

One of the best sources for Roman astrology is the didactic poem *Astronomica*, probably written by Marcus Manilius. It contains an examination of the zodiac and its signs. Manilius compares their influences and how to use them to cast a horoscope. Some thinkers were skeptical of the whole endeavour, however.

Cicero wondered how the planets could predict a person's fate. He pondered twins: "The fact that men who were born at the very same instant, are unlike in character, career, and in destiny, makes it very clear that the time of birth has nothing to do in determining man's course in life." He also asked about the thousands who died together in battle. "Did all the Romans who fell at Cannae have the same horoscope? Yet all had one and the same end."

The attacks of philosophers had very little effect on the population, and certainly not on the rulers of the Roman world. The exact time of a person's birth was noted and used to forecast their future. The first emperor, Augustus, went to visit an astrologer called Theogenes with a friend when he was a young man. They had their horoscopes taken, and the friend was a predicted a great future, irritating the future emperor as his fate must be less august. When the astrologer read Augustus' chart, however, he leapt from his seat and "paid him adoration". Theogenes was proved right in this prediction.

> Electional astrology looks at what the sky will look like in the future to predict the best (and worst) dates for events and activities

Augustus even used his horoscope to show that he had divine backing for his rule. When he was emperor, he published his horoscope. He also produced a silver coin with the image of Capricorn, the sign he was born under. Later emperors would be more circumspect with their horoscopes.

Because astrology could be used to predict the death of an emperor, or encourage someone with a horoscope that predicted greatness to attempt a coup, some attempted to ban the art. When he was an old man, Augustus had astrologers thrown out of Rome to stop people wondering how much longer he had to live. His successor, Tiberius, kept up the ban on astrologers, even as he kept the tame astrologer Thrasyllus by his side.

A greater threat to astrology than the disapproval of philosophers and emperors was the coming of Christianity. The early Church fathers disliked the idea that people had fixed fates dependent on their stars. Where would this leave free will and salvation? Lactantius said, "Demons... were the inventors of astrology."

Even the opposition of holy men did not fully eradicate astrology. It continued to flourish in Egypt and Christian Byzantium, even at the Roman Eastern Imperial Court. The works of astronomers and astrologers like Ptolemy of Alexandria became very influential in the development of astrology in the Medieval and Islamic worlds.

The Antikythera Mechanism, recovered from a Roman shipwreck, used cogs to compute the accurate charting of celestial motions

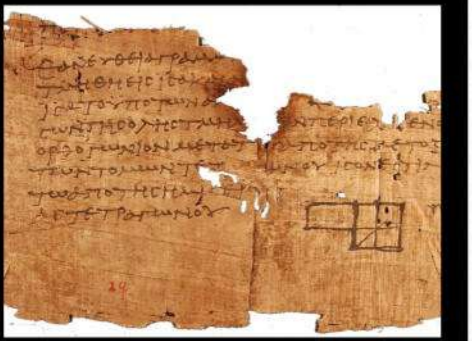
Horoscopes from the sands

Because of the brittle and flammable nature of most writing materials in the ancient world, very few texts have survived directly from antiquity. Only those works that were repeatedly copied over the centuries have come down to us, with one very notable exception.

In the deserts of Egypt, at a place called Oxyrhynchus, thousands of papyrus fragments have been excavated that give us a glimpse into the lives of ordinary people. The Oxyrhynchus papyri have produced lost works by great authors like Sappho, but also letters and texts by unknown individuals. Among them are a handful of horoscopes written in the first centuries CE.

One horoscope, written on a scrap of papyrus from 161 CE, reads simply: "Sun in Leo, Moon and Saturn in Scorpio, Mars and Mercury in Virgo, Jupiter in Taurus, Venus in Cancer. Horoscope in Gemini, good luck!" Other horoscopes, however, were far more detailed and written on expensive materials. Those that are addressed to individuals let us know the sort of people who commissioned horoscopes at this time. Most were men and few were Christian, but exceptions have been discovered.

By using the astronomical data provided in the horoscope, it is sometimes possible to calculate the exact date when a chart was drawn up.



The papyri from Oxyrhynchus show how astrology was practiced in Egypt in the first centuries of the common era

Medieval and early modern astrology

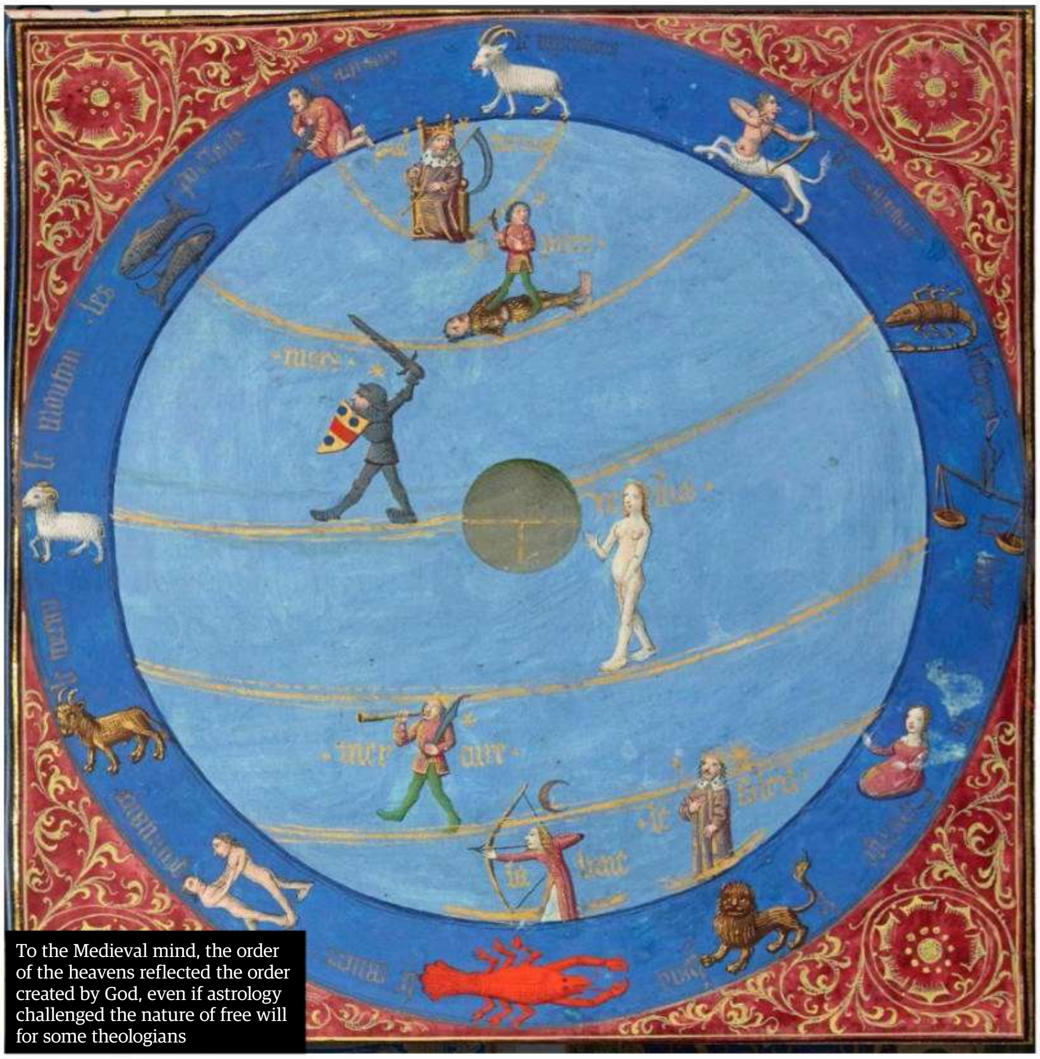
The Middle Ages and early modern period saw a flourishing of astrology as thinkers saw an order in the outer universe that mirrored that on Earth

Writers of the Medieval world respected and venerated the work of thinkers from antiquity. No astronomer and astrologer was more influential than the 2nd-century-CE Alexandrian writer Ptolemy. His comprehensive astronomical treatise known as the *Almagest* standardised the geocentric model of the universe that would last for over 1,000 years.

Ptolemy's understanding of the motions of the heavens gave him the ability to interpret those movements. He created one of the most in-depth works on astrology. His four-part text, known as the *Tetrabiblos*, discussed not only the general philosophy of astrology, but also how to cast individual horoscopes. For Ptolemy, astrology was both natural and useful. An astrologer must take into account many things, though, when creating a chart and interpreting it. As well as the positions of the planets and stars, one must consider the family of the person and their station in life.

Ptolemy's work was lost to early Medieval Europe because few could read the Greek that it was written in. However, his works were translated into Arabic and informed the astrology performed in the Islamic world. It was only in the 12th century that his texts were translated into Latin. In Muslim-dominated Spain, many works were available from antiquity in Arabic. Many in Christian Europe travelled there to complete their education.

One scholar who studied in Spain was the future Pope Sylvester II. Because of his deep knowledge of many subjects, Sylvester became notorious. He is credited with inventing mechanical clocks and reforming mathematics. He was also said to have studied the dark arts, magic and astrology.


To the Medieval mind, the order of the heavens reflected the order created by God, even if astrology challenged the nature of free will for some theologians

The Christian antipathy towards astrology had existed from the earliest days of the faith and that it was arriving via Islamic sources did not endear it to the Church. Rather uncomfortably, some Christians found divine approval for astrology in the story of Jesus' nativity. Did not a star blaze forth to guide the wise men towards Jesus? Nonetheless, early Church councils had agreed that astrology should be prohibited.

The practice was condemned by the Council of Toledo in 400 CE. The 5th-century Pope Leo I wrote of "the empty lies of the astrologers". Yet many churchmen studied astronomy closely, if for no other reason than to determine the correct time of Easter based on the time of the first full moon after the March equinox.

Despite papal fulminations against astrology, the practice persisted and important people still consulted astrologers. Guido Bonatti was an astrologer of the 13th century who was an advisor to Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. Bonatti's treatise on astrology won him undying fame, but also earned him a place in the eighth circle of Hell according to Dante.

Dante may have disapproved of astrology, but he still used planetary and celestial symbolism in his works. Chaucer went so far as to write a treatise on the astrolabe, a device used to calculate the position of the stars, and its uses in astrology. Morever, the child born of Abelard and Héloïse's famous illicit love affair was actually named Astrolabe.

At this point, astrology and astronomy were both sciences considered worthy of study. Saint Thomas Aquinas took a nuanced view; he castigated those who "take observation of the stars in order to foreknow casual or fortuitous future events… a superstitious and unlawful divination". Yet he also said: "If one were to apply the observation of the stars in order to foreknow those future things that are caused by heavenly bodies, for instance, drought or rain and so forth, it will be neither an unlawful nor a superstitious divination."

It was not just the mighty who wanted to consult the stars; common folk turned to astrologers, too. The notebooks of Richard Trewythian from 15th-century London record the horoscopes he cast for neighbours. He created charts to find out whether women were pregnant or if husband and wife will quarrel. One man, James Herkyng, simply wanted to know where his wife was.

One of Trewythian's most common topics of consultation concerned health. In an age where diseases remained mysterious and plagues were commonplace, astrologers were able to offer explanations for pestilence. The term influenza reflects the idea that it was caused by the influence of the stars. When plague struck Paris in 1348, astrologers were consulted and their explanation clear – the illness was the result of a conjunction of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

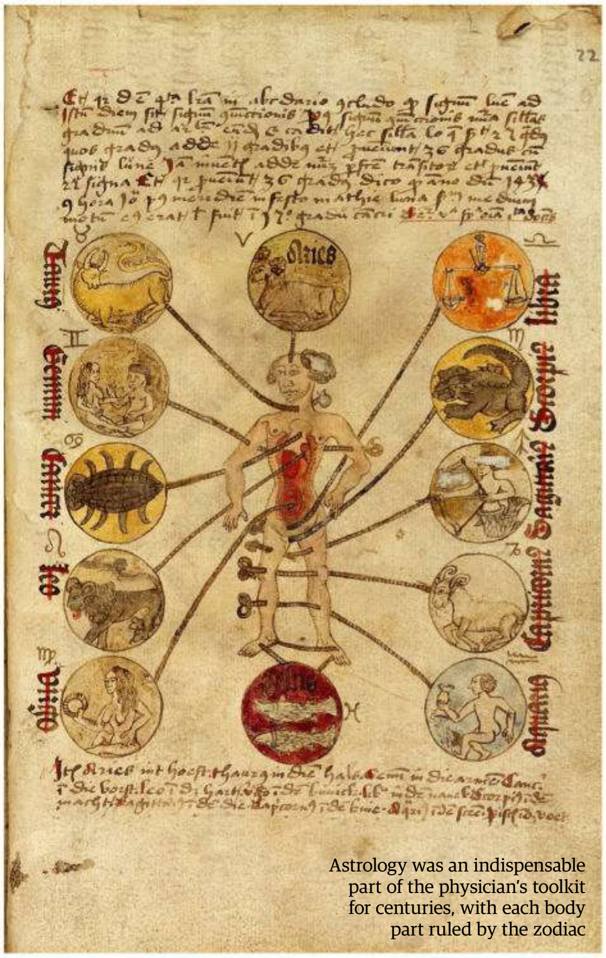
The Medieval understanding of the universe divided it into two distinct areas. All the things in the world that we are familiar with belong to the sublunary world, the part of the universe below the Moon. All the celestial bodies move beyond the Moon. It was understood that the Moon influenced tides, so it also seemed plausible that the other planets and stars should determine events on Earth. The alchemical axiom "as above, so below" reflects this belief.

By the 16th century, there were few doubters of the efficacy of astrology. Queen Elizabeth I of England regularly consulted the astrologer John Dee, who set the date of her coronation. Pope Julius II began the construction of St Peter's Basilica in Rome at a time deemed propitious by his astrologers.

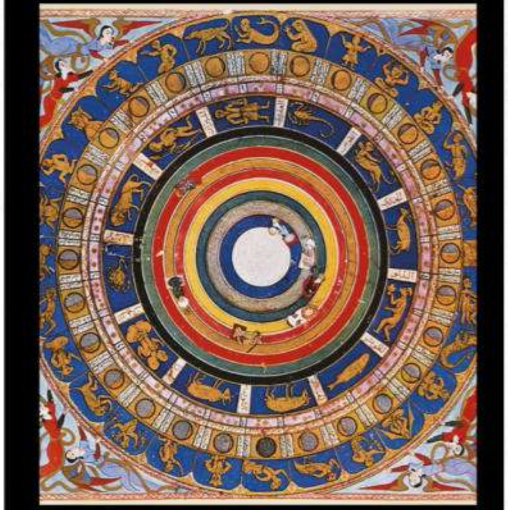
The Renaissance may have been the high water mark for astrology in Europe. Symbols of the zodiac decorated books, walls and clocks throughout the continent. Yet advances in science were to make people question the influence of the planets on everyday life. In 1543, Copernicus proposed a heliocentric model of the solar system that revolutionised astronomy and astrology.

Many people did continue to have faith in astrology after Copernicus. Hew Draper was accused of sorcery in the 1560s and arrested. Carved into the stone walls of a cell in the Tower of London is a beautiful and fairly incriminating horoscope he cast while imprisoned. Whether he took comfort from what he saw is not known.

Synastry looks at two people's natal charts to see if they would be romantically compatible in a relationship



Astrology was an indispensable part of the physician's toolkit for centuries, with each body part ruled by the zodiac



Islamic works of astrology were often highly decorated. This diagram of the zodiac was dedicated to Ottoman Sultan Murad III in 1583

Islamic astrology

Theologically, Islam has a similar position to Christianity when it comes to astrology. Several of the sayings of the prophet Muhammad suggest that astrology should not be done. "Whoever seeks knowledge from the stars is seeking one of the branches of witchcraft." Yet there has been a rich tradition of astrology in Islam since its foundation.

It is thanks to the transmission of Greek texts through Arabic translation that we have many of the earliest sources on astrology. Islamic interest in astrology was not merely theoretical or academic.

The 9th-century Persian astrologer Albumasar was a key figure at the Abbasid court, although he sometimes suffered for his art. Once when he predicted an event that came to pass, he was whipped by the caliph. "I hit the mark," he said, "and I was severely punished." Albumasar's works on astrology were to be translated into Latin and they influenced later thinkers like Albertus Magnus.

One of the greatest Muslim scholars of the 9th century was Al-Kindi. He studied philosophy but also turned his mind to everything from perfumes to medicine. One of his areas of expertise was astrology. He wrote books with titles like *The Book of the Judgement of the Stars* and *On the Revolutions of the Years*.

Modern and contemporary astrology

Despite the best efforts of skeptics and scientists, astrology has found many adherents who see no contradiction between rationality and casting horoscopes

The Age of Enlightenment saw a questioning of old beliefs and the shaking of intellectual certainties. Thinkers attacked the validity of astrology on numerous grounds ranging from the religious to the empirical. Some turned to ridicule.

The satirist Jonathan Swift mocked the astrologer John Partridge, who had a habit of making inaccurate predictions about the deaths of famous people. Swift created a fake astrologer called Isaac Bickerstaff who made a prediction that Partridge would die an “infallible death” on a certain date. When the day arrived, Swift announced Partridge's demise – and none of Partridge's protestations of still being alive could stop people laughing at him.

Yet many remained convinced that astrology was a useful tool. Almanacs offering predictions for the year ahead were bestsellers. One author published a poem in defense of astrology:

“*There some I know that do presume to say*
The world was never forewarned such a way
But I unto such fiery zealots tell
Astrology's from Heaven not from Hell
Tis no black Art no damned Necromancy
No Witchcraft neither as some please to fancy.”

Friday, January 14, 2011

HOROSCOPES

Capricorn DEC. 22-JAN. 19

You are headed into a time of beginnings. Some changes in life are out of your control, and at other time you have choices. Just because an opportunity comes along, doesn't mean you have to get involved. However, if you overlook something now, it may not come around again for a while, so think carefully, about what you want for the future.

Aquarius JAN. 20-FEB. 18

It has never been easier for people to consult astrologers – online they can have their horoscope cast by computer programs

The idea that the stars could predict the future found some support in the ideas of the deists. These thinkers believed that God was like a watch-maker on a grand scale. At the beginning of time he had set everything in its proper motion. Why shouldn't he have left signs for us to read in the movements of the heavens?

There was a controversial division within astrology, however. Natural astrology, which used the movements of the stars and planets to predict things like the weather, tides and harvests, was uncontroversial. Judicial astrology was used to predict the fates of individuals and human affairs – and this smacked of magic to many. Yet it is judicial astrology that has come to dominate the modern scene.

Medical astrology looks at the planets that rule parts of the body and your natal chart to suggest possible problem areas

The Victorian era saw a resurgence of interest in esoteric arts such as spiritualism. Astrology also recovered some of its popularity through the work of theosophists like Alan Leo. Leo's astrological texts were read by many and he helped to transform astrology into the personal art it remains today. Instead of making firm predictions of events in a person's life, he dealt in “"tendencies”. It was the beginning of psychological astrology.

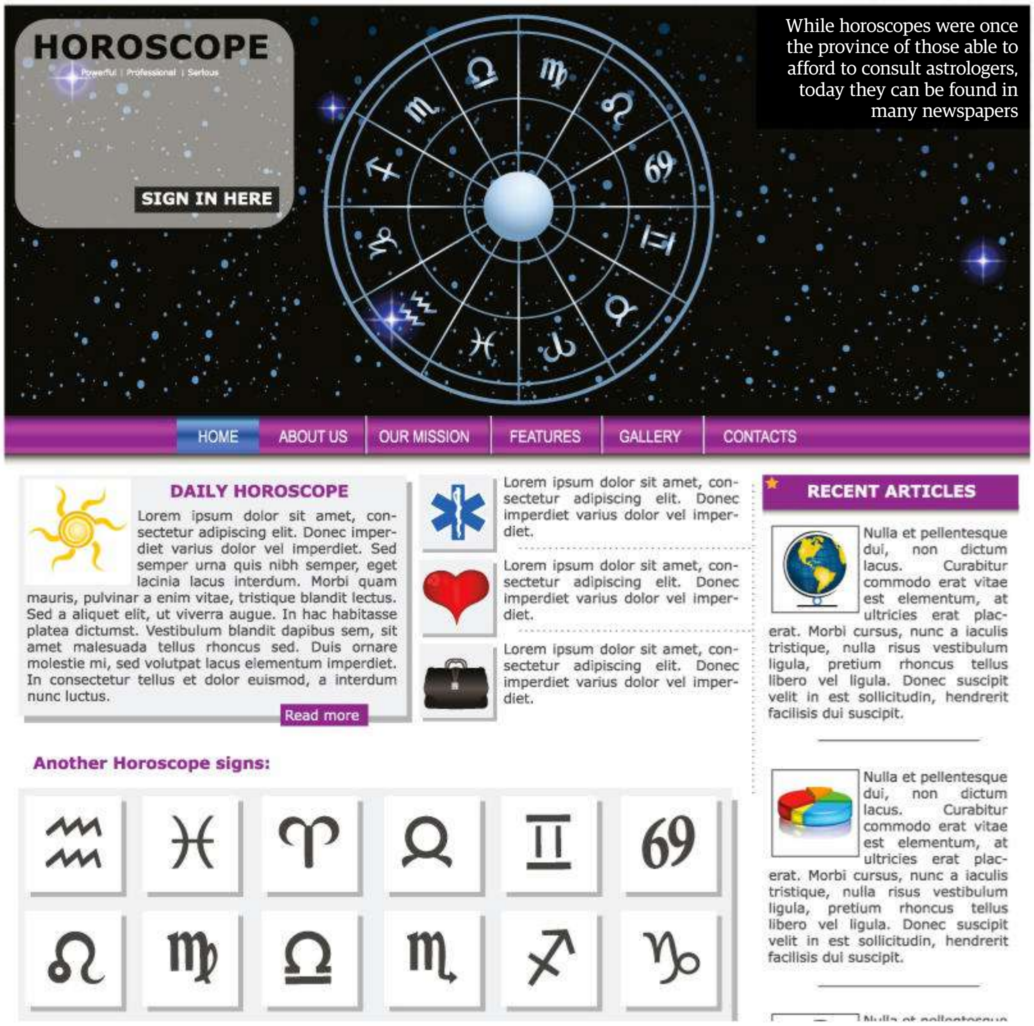
Leo's work was controversial, and not only with fellow astrologers. He was arrested in 1914 on the accusation that he “did unlawfully pretend to tell fortunes”. In the 1930s psychologist Carl Jung wrote that astrology was linked to the collective unconscious of humanity. The symbols and meanings of the zodiac were, he believed, linked to archetypes. “Astrology represents the sum of all the psychological knowledge of antiquity,” he wrote.

The 1930s also saw the birth of newspaper horoscope columns. When Princess Margaret was born in 1930, the *Sunday Express* hired the astrologer RH Naylor to cast her horoscope. In the article he wrote he described how her stars predicted an “eventful life”. Such was the popularity of his work that he was soon asked to create regular horoscopes.

The system he developed relied solely on a person's sun sign. This is the sign of the zodiac that the Sun is in on the day of someone's birth. In this way, Naylor could write 12 horoscopes that could cover the entire population. His weekly “What the Stars Foretell” was a sensation and other newspapers took on their own astrologers.

Today you would be hard pressed to find a person in the Western world who does not know their sun sign. But this simplified system of astrology has provided ripe ammunition for detractors of astrology. How can one prediction be valid for one-twelfth of the population on any given day? It is a question that many astrologers would also level at newspaper horoscopes. Some horoscope columns were not even written by astrologers but by journalists told to create interesting copy.

Science has also cast doubt on psychological astrology in the 20th century. A 1985 paper in the journal *Nature* found that most astrologers could not assign the correct sun sign to a person when provided with results of a personality test. Those who read horoscopes fared little better. When asked



While horoscopes were once the province of those able to afford to consult astrologers, today they can be found in many newspapers

DAILY HOROSCOPE

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Another Horoscope signs:

RECENT ARTICLES

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to pick the personality type that best matched with themselves, they rarely chose the correct one based on their sun sign.

One reason why people feel that their horoscopes in the paper are accurate is because of their vagueness. Scholars refer to this as the Barnum Effect. When a person is presented with statements that are universally true ("You have a tendency to be critical of yourself"), they identify strongly with them.

Another reason that newspaper horoscopes remain popular is that they work. By providing statements that apply to many people at the same time, they offer a moment of self-reflection. If your daily horoscope tells you not to be too hard on yourself today, then people receive a psychological boost that may improve their day.

Despite these criticisms, astrology is undergoing a renaissance. While in the past drawing an astrological chart took many years of training, a great deal of concentration and delicate interpretation, modern computers are able to perform an analysis in moments. The complex astronomical data needed for a chart is available at the touch of a button.

While sun sign astrology remains popular, many are moving away from its simplicity to the more complex readings that were given in past centuries. These require the charting of all the heavenly bodies to understand their influence. Technology and particularly the internet are helping spread astrology to all areas of life from health to beauty to relationships.

However, some things remain unchanged in modern astrology. Some religious groups continue to view astrology as a dark art related to demons and witchcraft. The Catholic Catechism says: "Practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future [such as] consulting horoscopes, astrology… contradict the honour, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone."

Uranian astrology looks at the location of midpoints between celestial bodies in the natal chart to identify traits and issues

Computing astrology

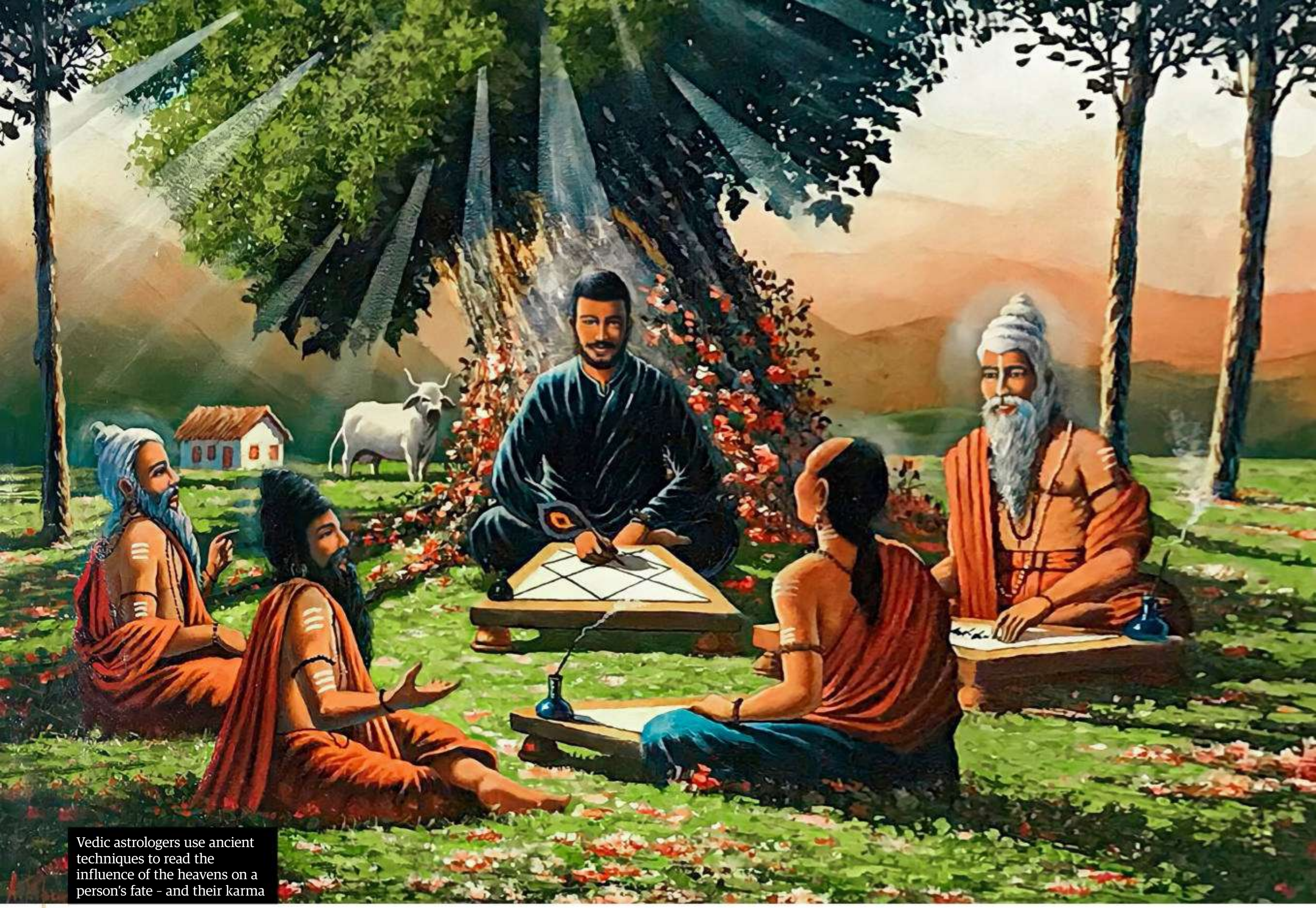
Computer astrology was born in the 1960s. In France, the astrologer André Barbault worked with a team of computer scientists to offer the world's first computer-produced horoscopes. Initially customers sent in for a mail-order horoscope and received a psychological analysis and six months' worth of predictions.

In 1968, in a car shop on the Champs-Élysées, customers were invited to come and see the Astroflash computer in action. For a modest price, those interested in their horoscope were able to get it cast anonymously. The success was immediate.

In 1969, the Astroflash II was unveiled in Grand Central Station in New York City. It could produce a 14-page astrological analysis from the huge IBM computer astrologer. Whereas a human astrologer might take two weeks and $50 to create a chart and interpret it, the Astroflash II took just two minutes and charged $5.

The first astrological software for people to use on their home computers was created in 1980. Today there is no need for a clumsy computer to work out a horoscope. Using the phone in your pocket, you can access a complete horoscope with just a few clicks.

The first computer astrology was performed on an IBM machine much like this one, with punch cards providing the information



Vedic astrologers use ancient techniques to read the influence of the heavens on a person's fate - and their karma

Vedic astrology

The religions of ancient India relied on astronomy to set the times of their rituals - and developed a complex system of astrology

Vedic astrology, known as Jyotisha, developed out of Hindu ritual. In the ancient world the most accurate calendar available was the yearly progression of the stars. By monitoring their movement, astrologers were able to ensure that rituals took place at the correct time of year. For this reason, astrology is one of the six arts required for Hindu rites to be effective.

Vedic astrology has been practiced for thousands of years and differs greatly from astrology in the West. The link between the stars and humanity is understood in terms of bandhu - the links between the outer and inner worlds. It also differs in how it understands the zodiac.

While the signs of the zodiac are the same as in Western philosophy, probably introduced via Greek texts in the wake of conquests by Alexander the Great, Vedic astrology uses a Sidereal system. Western astrology has fixed the dates of the zodiac for around 2,000 years, but the movement of the tilt of the Earth's axis creates a shift of one degree every 72 years. Today the Western astrological zodiac no longer matches up with the traditional dates assigned to them. Ayanamsa is the method used in Vedic astrology to take account for this precession of the equinoxes.

As well as the signs of the zodiac, called Rasi, Vedic astronomy uses lunar mansions, called Nakshatras, to divide the night sky. These are 28 divisions of the sky. The Moon spends one day in each mansion. Charting where the Moon was at the time of a person's birth is just as important as noting the position of the Sun. Each of the Nakshatras is personified as the daughter of one of the gods of creation.

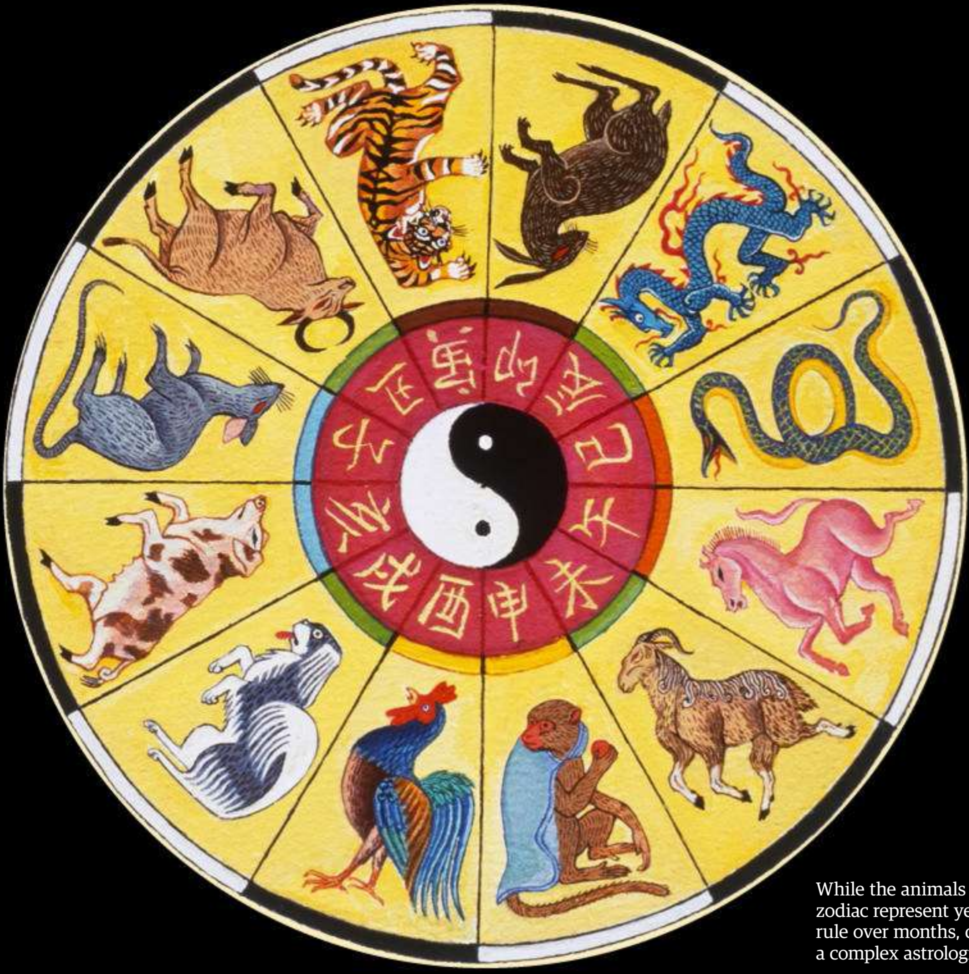
While Western astrology is linked to a person's psychology, Vedic astrology focuses on karma. The position of the stars maps out the path of a person's life and the state of the karma they carry from past lives. From Vedic horoscopes, one can work out the timings of successes and failures in life in a reading known as a Muhurtha.

As more planets were discovered, they were added to the calculations of Western astrologers, but Vedic astrologers only use the seven traditional planets (including the Sun and Moon).

Today Vedic astrology is as popular in India as it ever was. Western astrologers are also taking an interest in their practices, leading to innovations and syncretisms between the two.

The Chinese zodiac

Unlike the monthly zodiac used by Western astrologers, the system developed in China marks a cycle of 12 years



While the animals of the Chinese zodiac represent years, they can also rule over months, days and hours in a complex astrological system

The oldest written records from China are found on what are known as oracle bones. People in the late 2nd millennium BCE seeking to know the will of heaven wrote questions on bones or turtle shells. A red hot poker was then applied to them and from the pattern of cracks that formed, an answer could be discerned. Many of these oracle bones describe celestial phenomena like eclipses, comets and the movement of the planets with questioners hoping to know what it means.

From these early beginnings developed a complex system for studying the heavens and interpreting the signs found there. Using a sexagenary system, dates could be broken down into cycles of 60 years or 60 days. In the West most people are familiar with the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac that each rule a year. Yet Chinese astrology also combines these signs with the concept of yin and yang, and with five elements. Taken together, the Chinese zodiac only repeats once every 60 years.

According to legend, the animals of the Chinese zodiac were assigned to their years by the divine Jade Emperor. He ordered a great race between all the animals. They would be given years depending on the order in which they reached the Jade Emperor. As well as a great distance of land to cross, there was also a mighty river.

The first to reach the banks of the river were the cat and the rat. Neither of these creatures were good at swimming so they relied on the kindness of the ox, who offered to ferry them across on its back. Halfway across, the rat knocked the cat into the river, where it drowned. Just before the ox stepped out of the river, the cunning rat ran and leapt off its nose, becaming the winner of the race, soon followed by the ox. The rest of the animals came later.

This story explains why the order of the Chinese zodiac is Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. It also explains why cats have such a hatred for rats.

Each of the signs of the Chinese zodiac have features attributed to them. Rats are quick-witted, while Dragons are ambitious and energetic. The Chinese zodiac follows a lunar calendar that begins each year in January or February.

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The story of the stars

We look up today and see the stars divided into the same familiar shapes as our ancestors, but how did the constellations come to be?

Written by Nikole Robinson

© Getty

We've always had a fascination with the stars, bright beacons of light that come alive when the sky darkens. They've been revered as gods, used to mark changes in the seasons and as a way to navigate the globe. It's difficult to trace back when exactly people started looking up and taking note of familiar patterns that were formed by these points of light, but some propose that 17,000-year-old cave paintings in Lascaux, France, depict the constellations we today know as Taurus and Orion.

Ancient cultures across the world saw these patterns in different ways, often linking them to legends that were told among their people or the local fauna and flora, or creating new myths from the shapes they saw. The constellations that make up the zodiac – the stars that follow the ecliptic – are some of the oldest recorded, and remain essentially the same today as ancient Babylonian astronomers recorded them in the 6th century BCE.

Although there are older records from many different places and cultures that tell their own stories, it is the ancient Greeks that made a lasting impact on astronomy. Ptolemy, a Greek astronomer who lived in the city of Alexandria in the 2nd century CE, made a comprehensive list of 1,022 stars, illustrating them as members of 48 constellations, many of which adopted imagery from Greek myths and legends and older Babylonian ideas. This ancient text, called *Almagest*, became the basis of what we recognise in the sky today.

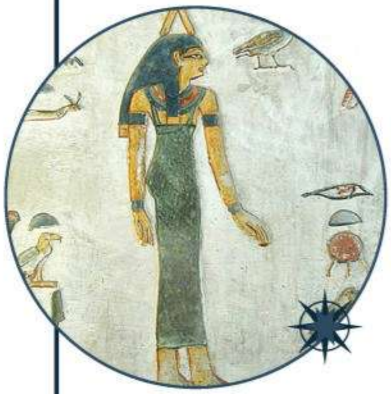
About 800 years after Ptolemy recorded his knowledge of the heavens, a Persian astronomer, Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi, translated his Greek into Arabic, bringing his stellar stories to another part of the globe. As Ptolemy had never named the individual stars in his work, al-Sufi incorporated Arabic names. His observations were so advanced that his work, the *Book of Fixed Stars*, travelled across Europe, his star names being accepted along with the constellations they were woven into. Many stars still bear these Arabic names.

After the invention of the telescope, more and more stars were discovered and named, with many different influences. To avoid confusion, in 1922 a group of astronomers from around the world decided it was time to properly map the stars, putting official boundaries between the constellations to make it easier to navigate the sky and locate specific objects. Now divided into 88 official constellations, drawing heavily from Ptomely and al-Sufi's works, next time you gaze up at them, think about the many stories that have been told about each one across the ages.

Ancient astronomy

Though the ancient Greek interpretations are the ones that stuck, what did other cultures see in the stars?

Today we know of trillions of stars, and even other galaxies. We have classifications for different stellar types, and can work out a star's mass, density and composition from many light years away. We know that stars are dense balls of gas that are fusing hydrogen to power themselves, creating light as they do. But before the modern age of science, people could only guess at what these bright lights in the night were. Here are some of the oldest interpretations, and what the stars meant to these ancient observers.

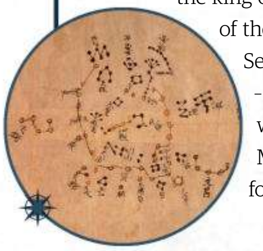


SIRIUS, THE NILE STAR

Sirius was very important to the ancient Egyptians. Each year in mid-August, it would be the first bright star to rise in the predawn sky, known as a heliacal rising. The timing coincided with the annual flooding of the River Nile, alerting people who lived near its banks that it was time to move inland to safety. A second calendar was created to measure the time until its return. They knew the star as Sopdet, the personification of a goddess associated with the fertility that the flooding brought to the land.

THE FOUR SYMBOLS

Ancient Chinese astronomers charted the night sky into four regions, each of which was assigned one of the Four Symbols: the Azure Dragon of the East, a dragon god; the Black Tortoise of the North, who symbolised longevity; the White Tiger of the West, the king of beasts; and the Vermillion Bird of the South, an elegant fire-red bird. Seven constellations – or 'mansions' – within each of these symbols were used as a way to follow the Moon's motion across the sky, forming an early lunar calendar.

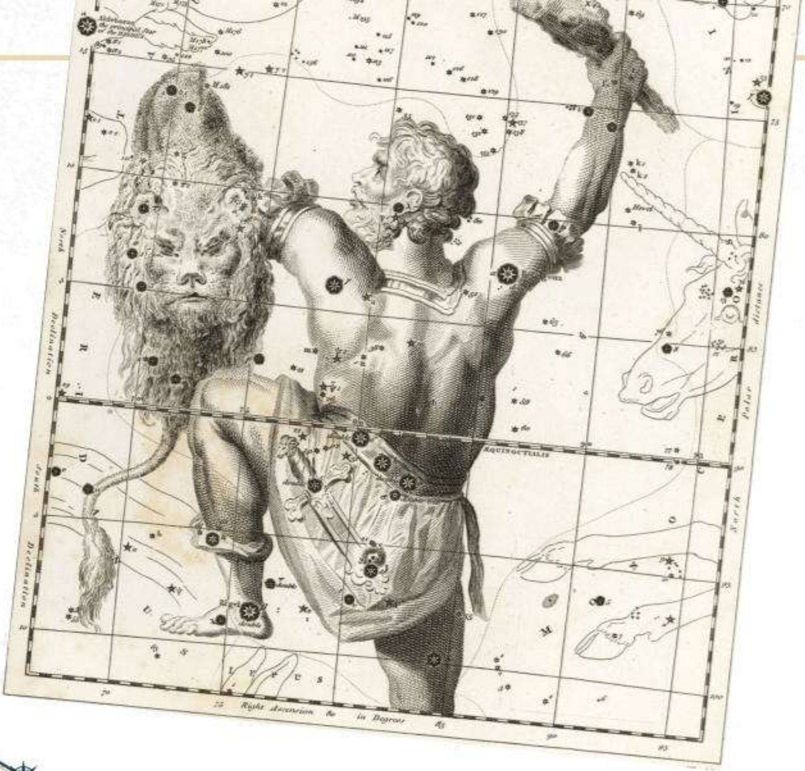


SCORPION OR FISHHOOK?

Part of the zodiac, this constellation is officially dubbed Scorpius or Scorpio, the Scorpion. But for hundreds of years Polynesians have seen its inverted tail as a fishhook – one belonging to a demigod of legend: Maui. Maui possessed a magical fishhook, Manaiakalani, which could catch anything. He and his brothers set out to sea, where Maui cast his line. Tricking them into thinking he had caught a giant fish, Maui got his brothers to paddle the canoe as fast as they could to reel in his line, pulling up islands from the sea for humans to live on.

MAYA STAR TRACKING

Mayans were keen astronomers, tracking the Sun, Moon, planets and Milky Way across the heavens and constructing incredibly accurate calendars for the time using their knowledge. They built many structures and buildings to align with certain stars, and there's evidence they had a 13-star zodiac that took the shapes of the native wildlife. Polaris was also known to the Maya, though they knew it as Xaman Ek. It was sometimes associated with the rain god who brought the storms of winter.



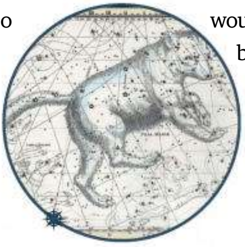
Myths and monsters

How the ancient Greeks wove lasting legends into the sky

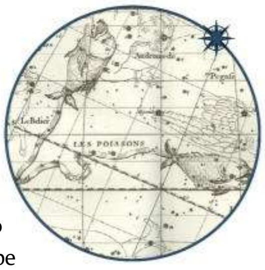
Though some constellations were borrowed from the Babylonians - brought to Greece by Eudoxus of Cnidus in the 4th century BCE - ancient Greek scholars considered astronomy to be a mathematic art, a way to use geometry to predict the motion of the heavens. Many ancient Greek scholars mapped and wrote about the stars above and their motions, but the most well known today is Ptolemy's book *Almagest*. In it he identified the 12 constellations of the zodiac, 21 to the north of the ecliptic and 15 to the south, naming them after heroes and beasts alike from famous poems and myths, whose deeds had allowed them to be made immortal among the stars and revered as semi-divine spirits.

URSA MAJOR (THE GREAT BEAR)

Containing one of the most famous asterisms in the sky and pointing the way to Polaris, Ursa Major had been seen as a bear by many primitive cultures before the ancient Greeks. To the Greeks the bear was Callisto. Zeus had an affair with the huntress, who bore a son. When Zeus' wife found out, she was so enraged that she turned Callisto into a bear. Zeus later placed her in the stars to keep her safe. Callisto is also the namesake of one of Jupiter's moons.



PISCES (THE FISHES)

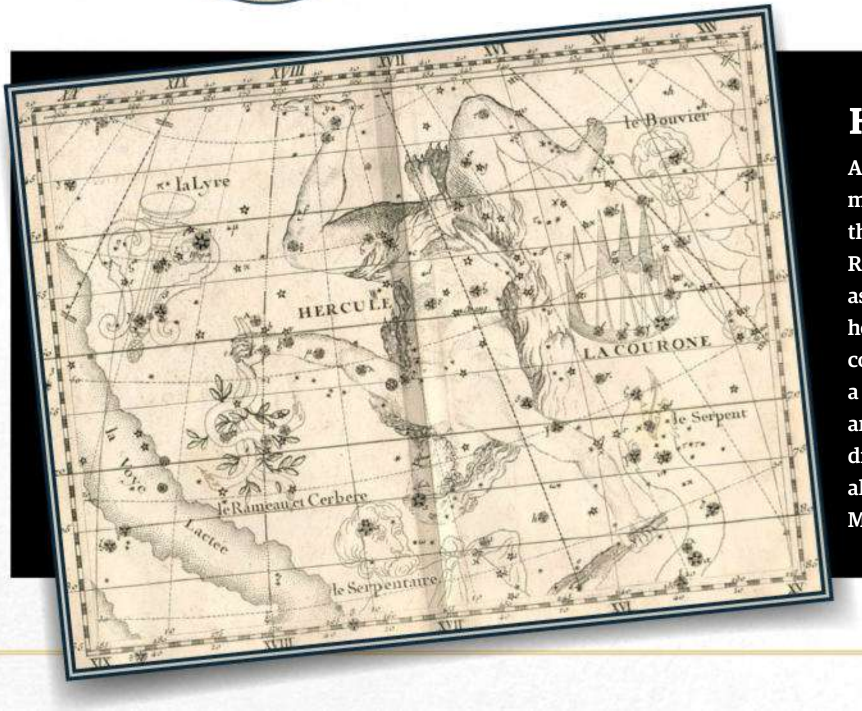


An equatorial constellation, Pisces forms the shape of two fish connected by a rope of stars. In an effort to escape a monster that had been sent to attack Mount Olympus - the home of the gods - the goddess of love Aphrodite and her son, Eros, transformed themselves into fish in order to flee into the Euphrates River. They tied their tails together with a cord so that they would not lose one another. Its brightest star was originally given the name Kullat Nunu, meaning 'the cord of the fish' due to its place in the constellation.

ORION (THE HUNTER)

Visible in the Northern Hemisphere in the winter months and easily recognised by his famous belt of three bright stars, Orion, the Hunter, has been identified in many cultures over thousands of years as a hunter, shepherd or warrior. In Greek mythology he was the demigod son of Poseidon, and an accomplished hunter. He proudly boasted to the goddess Artemis that he could hunt and kill any creature if he wanted to. This made Gaia, the earth goddess, angry, and she sent a giant scorpion to kill him as punishment for his pride. Orion and Scorpius were both placed in the sky as a warning against arrogance and upsetting Gaia - though on opposite sides of the sky so that they could avoid each other.

> "Orion has been identified in many cultures over thousands of years as a hunter, shepherd or warrior"



HERCULES (THE HERO)

Also known as Heracles and a true icon in ancient Greek mythology, Hercules was perhaps the best-known hero in the stories of old, with tales of his deeds spreading to ancient Rome. A demigod with incredible strength, Hercules was assigned 12 seemingly impossible tasks to atone for a crime he had committed. He used his power, courage and skill to complete all 12 tasks, and was immortalised in the stars as a prize. Many of Hercules' conquests have also been placed among the stars, such as Leo, a fierce lion; Draco, a great dragon; and the Hydra, a sea monster. This constellation is also known for hosting the stunning Great Globular Cluster, Messier 13.

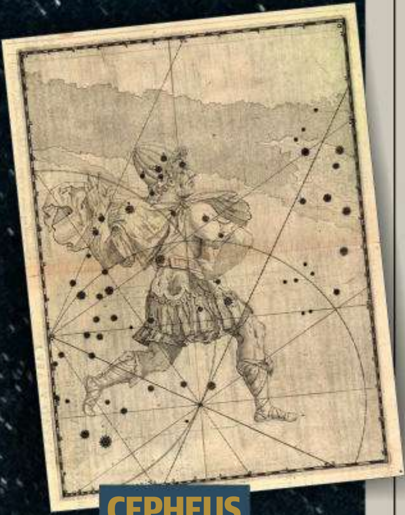
A whole cast of stars

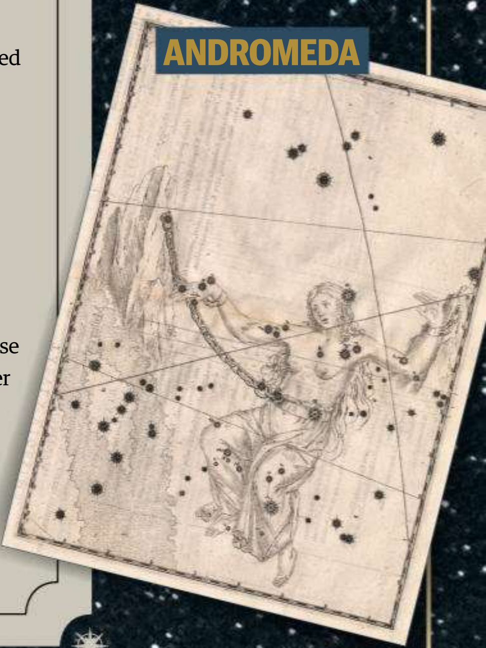
In Greek mythology, Cepheus and Cassiopeia were the king and queen of ancient Ethiopia – now they are the King and Queen in our stars. They had a beautiful daughter, Andromeda. Cassiopeia was incredibly vain, and boasted of her daughter's beauty, telling people she was lovelier than even the Nereids, sea nymphs whose beauty was renowned. This vanity angered the Nereids, who complained to the sea god Poseidon about the vain queen's words. To punish the queen for her arrogance, Poseidon sent floods and a sea monster, Cetus – though this constellation is often called the Whale in astronomy – to terrorise the coast of Ethiopia.

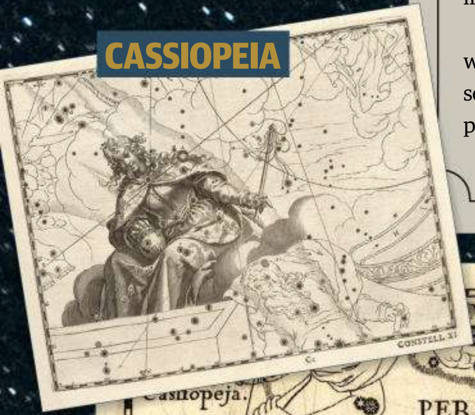
Wanting to appease the gods and end Poseidon's wrath, the king and queen were told that they must sacrifice their daughter to the sea monster. They chained the beautiful maiden to a rock to await her fate – hence why the constellation of Andromeda is often called 'the Chained Maiden' in modern times.

As luck would have it, the great hero Perseus was flying back over Ethiopia on his winged horse, Pegasus, after slaying the Gorgon Medusa. Falling in love at first sight with the beautiful damsel in distress below, Perseus saved her from her doom using the severed head of Medusa as a weapon, and took Andromeda as his bride. All of these characters have been placed into the stars, with the majority of them grouped together in a section of sky in the Northern Hemisphere, while Cetus lurks further south.

When the stars were later given names by al-Sufi, the variable star Beta Persei was named Algol, meaning the Demon's Head. It is said to depict the eye of the severed head of Medusa in the constellation of Perseus – although gazing up at this particular star won't turn you to stone.


CEPHEUS


ANDROMEDA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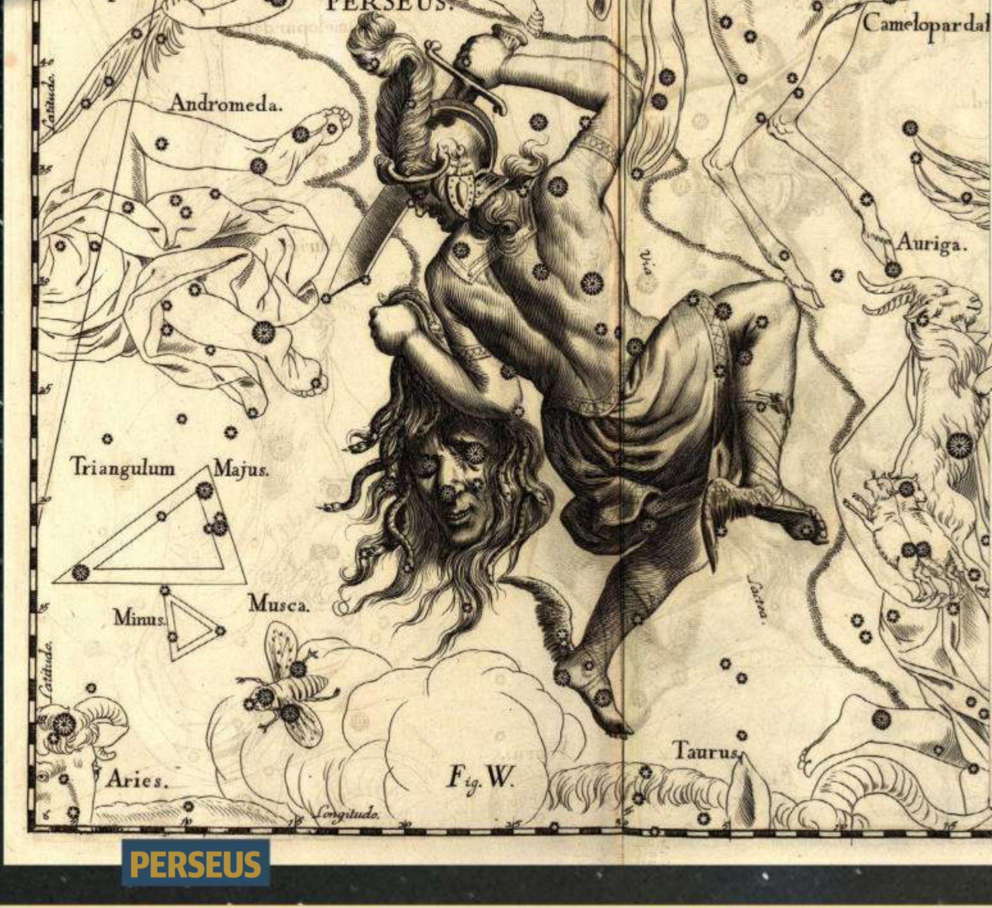
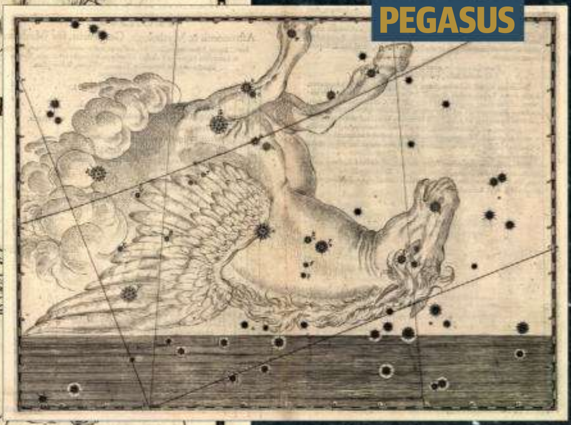
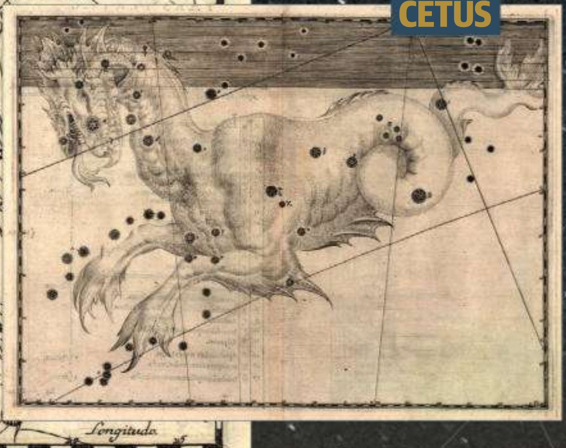


PERSEUS

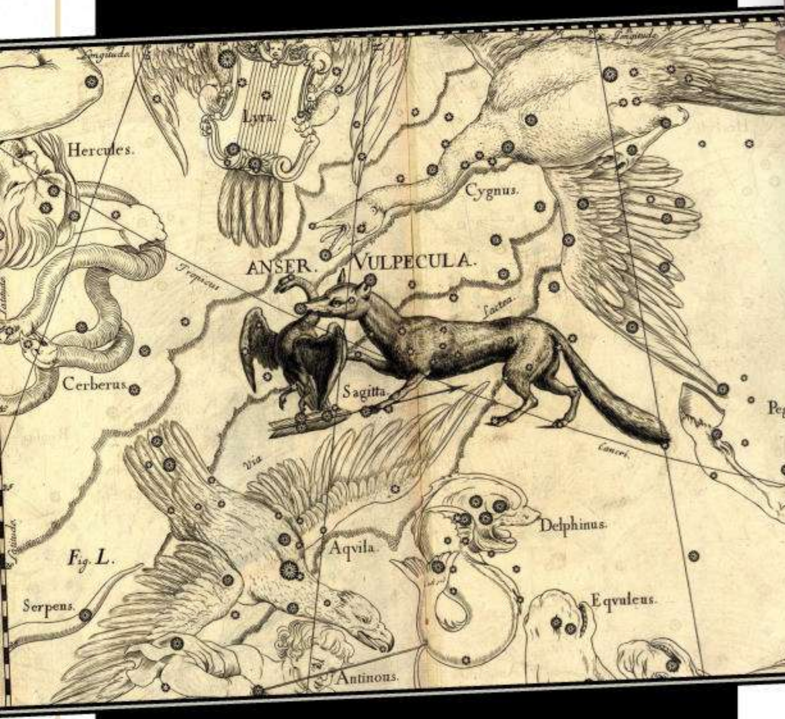

PEGASUS

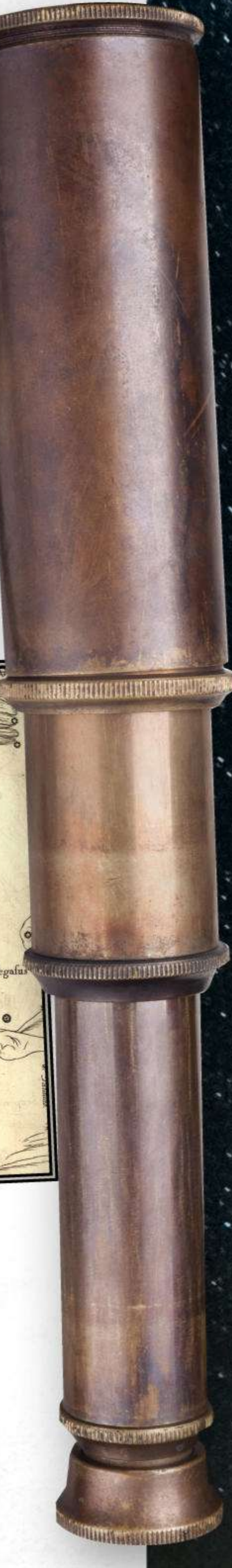

CETUS

Uncovering the southern skies

How the Age of Exploration discovered new groups of stars to give meaning to

The majority of the ancient constellations lie in the Northern Hemisphere because that is what the ancient cultures that mapped them could see from their positions on Earth. When European explorers began to sail further south to investigate new parts of the sea for potential trade routes in the 1600s, they found that the star maps they used for navigation were lacking the further they went. They soon realised that the skies below the equator contained uncharted stars that formed new patterns above them. Astronomers set out to map the entirety of the sky, classifying these newfound stars into constellations. Some of these built upon the legends of the northern constellations, while others were based on tools that helped in astronomy and navigation or exciting new animals that had been discovered as new continents were conquered.



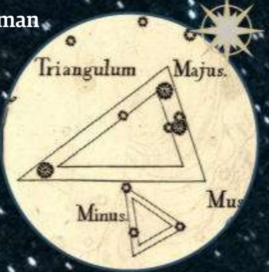


VULPECULA (THE LITTLE FOX)

Sitting in the sky in the middle of the Summer Triangle, Vulpecula, Latin for 'little fox', was originally envisioned as a fox with a goose clamped in its jaws by Johannes Hevelius, with him dubbing it Vulpecula et Anser – the little fox and the goose. Though he didn't see these two animals as separate constellations, the stars were later divided as such. Since then they have been merged into one constellation again, though the goose is remembered in the name of Vulpecula's brightest star, called Anser.

TRIANGULUM AUSTRALE (THE SOUTHERN TRIANGLE)

Not to be confused with its northern counterpart Triangulum, the Southern Triangle moved around the sky a little before it ended up where we find it today. The earliest depiction was by Dutch astronomer Petrus Plancius in 1589 on a celestial globe, though he incorrectly placed the tiny triangle to the south of the much larger constellation of Argo Navis. Plancius also originally listed the constellation as Triangulus Antarcticus. The German astronomer Johann Bayer later correctly depicted the constellation in his star atlas Uranometria in 1603, where it was given its current name of Triangulum Australe.



SCUTUM (THE SHIELD)

A long, narrow diamond of stars lying close to the ecliptic, Scutum was first classified by Polish astronomer Johannes Hevelius in 1684. He originally named it Scutum Sobiescianum – Shield of Sobieski – after King John III Sobieski to commemorate his victory in the 1683 Battle of Vienna. The king is also said to have helped Hevelius rebuild his observatory after a terrible fire almost destroyed it in 1679. The name was later shortened, like so many names of constellations have been over the years, to make it easier to reference. Scutum depicts a specific type of curved, oblong-shaped shield that was used in ancient Rome.

SCUTUM
SOBIESCI

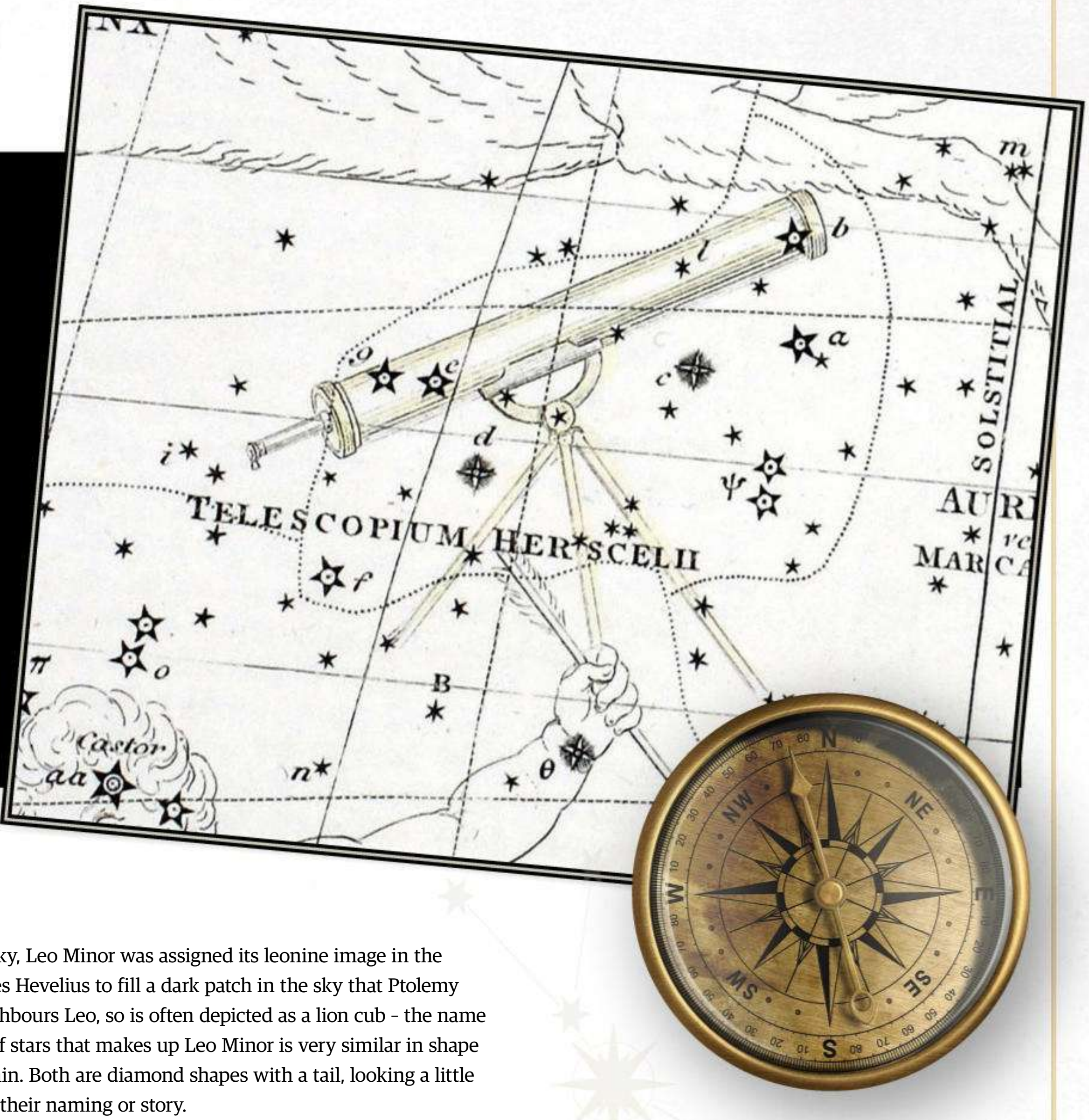
COLUMBA (THE DOVE)

A small winter constellation in the Southern Hemisphere, Columba, the Dove, was first depicted on a planisphere by Petrus Plancius in 1592, where he listed the stars as Columba Noachi – Noah's Dove. Not the only constellation to be named after a symbol of Christianity, the dove in the story of Noah's Ark was sent out to search for signs of land after the great flood. Returning with an olive branch in its beak, doves became a symbol of hope and peace. The constellation is often drawn carrying this branch in its beak. Its brightest star is Phact, which derives from an Arabic word for 'ring dove'.

COLUMBA NOACHI

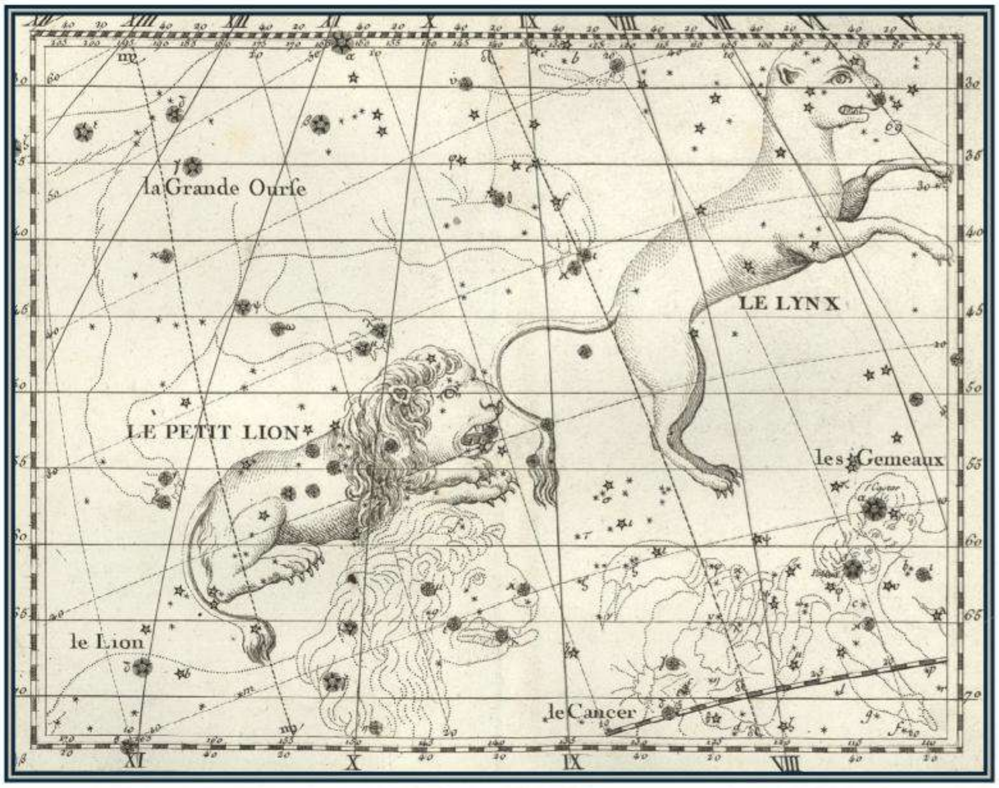
TELESCOPIUM (THE TELESCOPE)

Although humans had explored the stars for many years by the time telescopes came into use, as their use spread, astronomers could see more stars than ever before. The invention – which can be traced back to a patent by the Dutch spectacle maker Hans Lippershey in 1608 – was truly a revolution in observing the heavens. It's no wonder that astronomers decided to honour the invention with a place among the stars. French astronomer Nicolas-Louis de Lacaille first introduced it as a constellation in around 1751 after observing and cataloguing 10,000 southern stars and forming 14 new constellations.



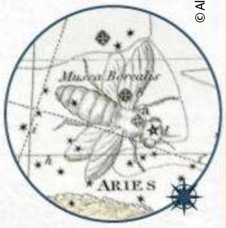
LEO MINOR (THE LITTLE LION)

One of the smallest constellations in the entire sky, Leo Minor was assigned its leonine image in the 1600s by astronomer pair Elisabeth and Johannes Hevelius to fill a dark patch in the sky that Ptolemy had found unremarkable. This constellation neighbours Leo, so is often depicted as a lion cub – the name translates from Latin as 'little lion'. The pattern of stars that makes up Leo Minor is very similar in shape to a northern constellation, Delphinus, the Dolphin. Both are diamond shapes with a tail, looking a little bit like kites, but the two are not related at all in their naming or story.



MUSCA (THE FLY)

Though for around 200 years this constellation had a second name – Apis, the Bee – Dutch astronomer Petrus Plancius originally named it De Vlieghe, Dutch for the Fly, when he established 12 new southern constellations based on observations by Dutch explorers who had sailed on a trading expedition and noted the new patterns above them. It is the only constellation to be named for an insect. Due to its closeness to Chamaeleon – named after the reptile first encountered by explorers of the time – they are often depicted together, with the Chameleon trying to snack on the Fly.



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Cancer
PISCES
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TAURUS
GEMINI
CANCER
LEO
VIRGO
LIBRA
CAPRICORN
SAGITTARIUS
Libra
Gemini
Scorpio
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Virgo
Cancer
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CANCER
LEO
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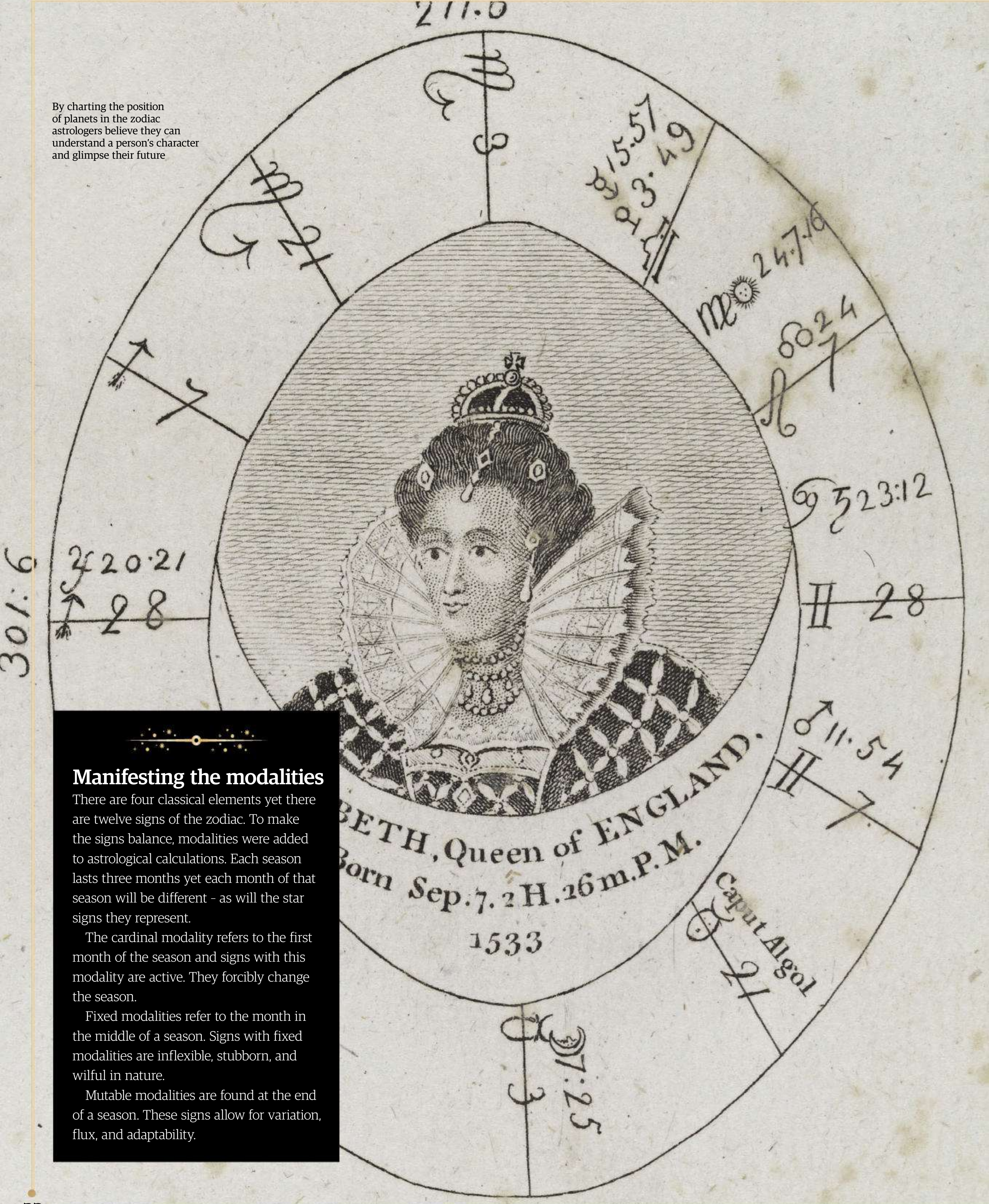
LIBRA
CAPRICORN
Cancer
Gemini
Scorpio
Aries
Taurus
Virgo

The zodiac

32 The zodiac
34 Aries
36 Taurus
38 Gemini
40 Cancer
42 Leo
44 Virgo
46 Libra
48 Scorpio
50 Sagittarius
52 Capricorn
54 Aquarius
56 Pisces
58 Ophiuchus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24
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23:12
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7
Caput Algol
27
7:25
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301:6
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28
7
27
BETH, Queen of ENGLAND.
Born Sep: 7. 2 H. 26 m. P.M.
1533

By charting the position of planets in the zodiac astrologers believe they can understand a person's character and glimpse their future

Manifesting the modalities

There are four classical elements yet there are twelve signs of the zodiac. To make the signs balance, modalities were added to astrological calculations. Each season lasts three months yet each month of that season will be different – as will the star signs they represent.

The cardinal modality refers to the first month of the season and signs with this modality are active. They forcibly change the season.

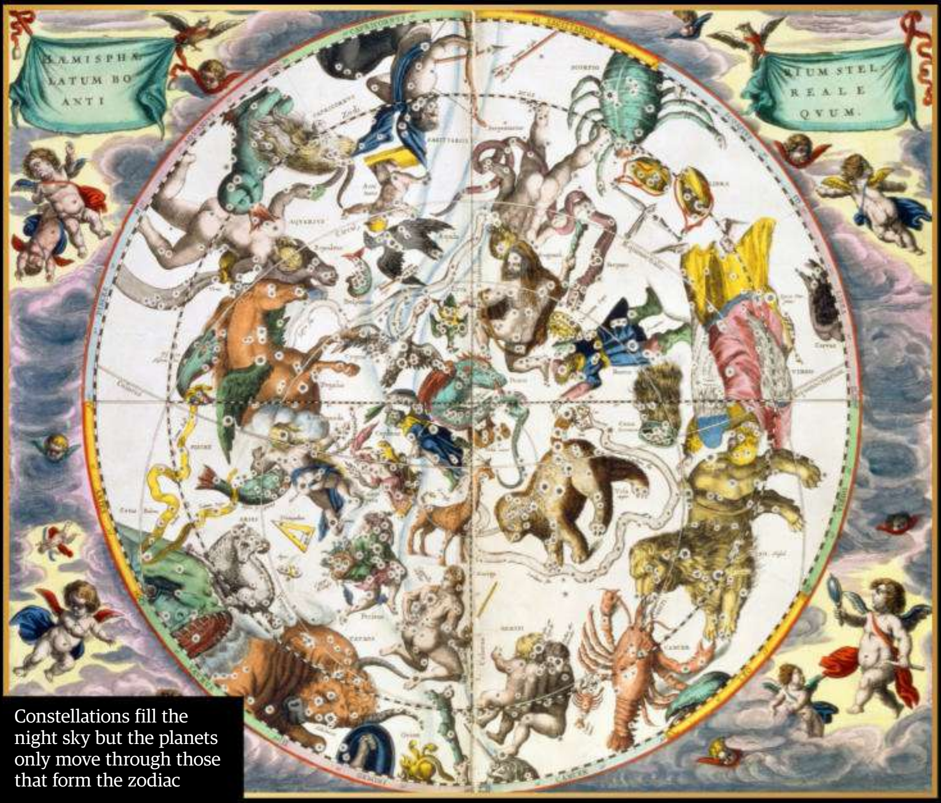
Fixed modalities refer to the month in the middle of a season. Signs with fixed modalities are inflexible, stubborn, and wilful in nature.

Mutable modalities are found at the end of a season. These signs allow for variation, flux, and adaptability.

The zodiac

In a belt running across the night sky are patterns of stars that have been hugely significant to humans for centuries

Written by Ben Gazur



Constellations fill the night sky but the planets only move through those that form the zodiac

When you look up at the night sky you will notice something remarkable. The whole dome of heaven rotates above you. Of course we now know that this is due to the rotation of the Earth and not the celestial spheres in motion. Yet despite not understanding the full mechanics of the cosmos, our ancestors were able to observe this and come up with incredibly detailed astronomical insights.

The ancient Egyptians in the 25th century BCE had created a calendar of 365 days per year based on the position of the stars. 365 days is how long it takes for stars to return to the same point due to the orbit of the Earth around the Sun. They split this year into 12 months of 30 days each, with an extra five day period per year.

Other cultures adopted this system. It was noticed that over the course of the year the Sun appeared to move in a circle against the fixed stars and constellations. The line the Sun marks out on its journey is called the ecliptic. It was in ancient Babylon that the ecliptic was broken up into 12 sections and the first zodiac was created.

People have always looked up at the stars and found that images leapt out at them. Where they saw a pattern they named them for what they saw, creating the constellations. Not everyone has used the same set of constellations - not everyone sees the same thing in the sky.

Today in Western astrology it is against the Greek and Roman set of constellations that we plot the heavens. In fact it is from the Greek 'zodiakos kyklos' - meaning 'animal circle' - that we get our term zodiac. By noting where planets and other celestial objects are in the sky many believe we can learn deep insights into ourselves and our futures.

© Getty images

The symbol used by astrologers for Aries represents the horns of the ram that allow it to butt through any obstacle

ARIES

Aries

THE RAM

Aries the Ram is one of the most forceful signs of the zodiac – and those born under it may be just as strong

21 March – 19 April

Written by Ben Gazur

Evidence of Aries as a constellation can be traced back to Babylonian texts of the 12th century BCE. There the stars which we now place in Aries were said to represent an 'Agrarian Worker'. Within a short period of time however the stars were being reinterpreted as the image of a ram owned by the Babylonian god of shepherds, Dumuzi. The Ram was also accepted by the Egyptians as a constellation, though they associated it with the ram-headed god Amon-Ra.

It is from the Greeks that the modern image and interpretation of Aries as the Ram has developed. According to myth, Phrixus and Helle were the twin children of the king of Boeotia. When the king remarried, their stepmother sought to have the children killed. She tricked the king into believing a famine would only end if he sacrificed the children. The king took the pair to the top of a mountain to perform the ritual. It was then that a flying ram came to the rescue.

The ram was sent by the children's cloud nymph mother Nephele. The pair rode away on its back through the air. Helle slipped from the ram and drowned in the waters forever after known as the Hellespont. Phrixus was taken safely to Colchis and sacrificed the ram to the god Poseidon in thanks. The ram's golden fleece was hung in a tree – later to be the object of a quest by Jason and his Argonauts.

Aries is the first sign of the zodiac and is associated with those who seek leadership and leap into action. As a fire sign Aries represents the passionate and impatient. Some may see people born under Aries as blunt, but they may simply be direct. Aries seeks to prove their abilities and are confident that they will stand up to the test.

♈

Element: Fire
Ruling planet: Mars
Modality: Cardinal
Stars: Hamal, Sheratan, and Mesarthim

Aries is a constellation recognised since ancient times as representing a ram. As Aries is the first sign of the zodiac, those born under Aries are said to be leaders; assertive, and active. Conversely people with Aries as their birth sign may be rash, impatient, or find communication difficult.

© Alamy; Getty

The astrological symbol for Taurus captures the image of a bull's sharp horns that represent the thrusting nature of the sign

TAURUS

Taurus

THE BULL

Taurus the Bull represents people with two energy levels – resting comfortably, or charging off with their heads down

19 April – 20 May

Written by Ben Gazur

In Babylonian myths, including the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the mightiest creatures is the Great Bull of Heaven. In Babylonian astronomy this was the name given to the constellation currently called Taurus. But even older cultures may have recognised Taurus as a bull in the heavens. Some researchers have linked an image of a bull painted in the cave at Lascaux, and dated to 15,000 years ago, as the earliest depiction of this formation of stars.

To the ancient Greeks there were a number of bulls which might have been the basis for this constellation. Zeus, as is well known, had a fondness for transforming himself into animals to woo mortal females. When he saw the princess Europa by the beach he turned into a magnificent white bull. Europa approached the bull and caressed his flanks before climbing onto the gentle bull's back. It was then that the bull carried Europa off into the sea and swam away with her to Crete. He later commemorated the deed by placing Taurus in the heavens.

Another version suggests that Taurus was the image of Io, one of Zeus' former lovers. Io had been transformed into a cow by Zeus' jealous wife Hera, or by Zeus himself to hide his human lover.

Regardless of the supposed source of Taurus, today it is recognised as one of the signs of the zodiac. Taureans, those born under the Bull, are thought to have many of the characteristics of a bull. They will work hard at any task, have the strength to achieve their aims, and are perfectionists. Potential negatives of the Taurean personality are a love of luxury and indulgence. Just as bulls are famously stubborn beasts, those who are born under the influence of Taurus may reject authority or fight against those who try to direct them.

♉

Element: Earth
Ruling planet: Venus
Modality: Fixed
Stars: Aldebaran, Elnath, Alcyone, and the Pleiades

The constellation Taurus has been viewed as a bull across cultures and since ancient times. Those born under Taurus have bullish personalities. They are hard workers, intelligent, and dependable. They may also be somewhat stubborn and reject authority. Taureans value stability and will show great patience in pursuit of their goals.

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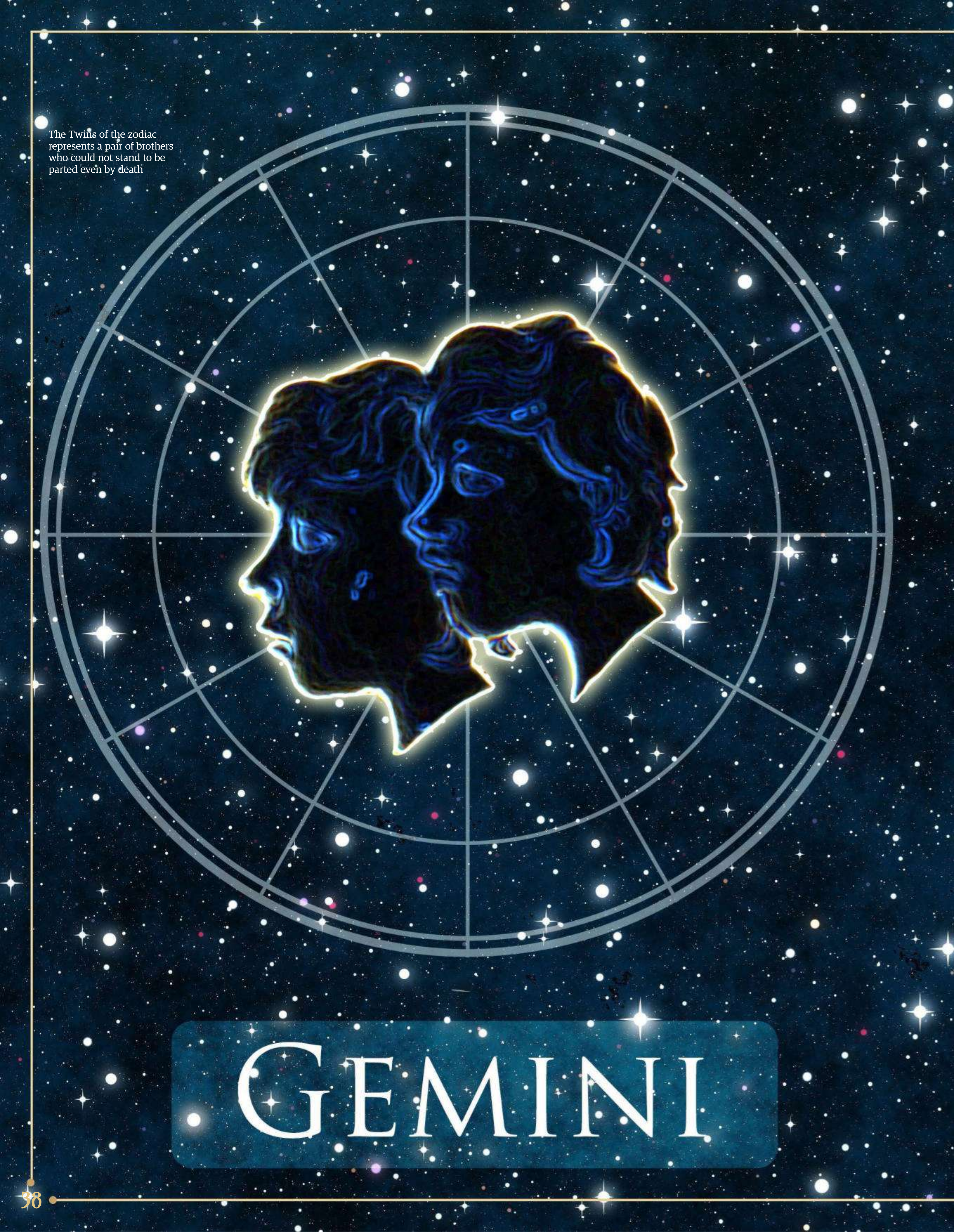

The Twins of the zodiac represents a pair of brothers who could not stand to be parted even by death

GEMINI

Gemini

THE TWINS

The Twins of Gemini represent those with dual natures, always curious about new things but also balanced

20 May - June 21

Written by Ben Gazur

The major distinguishing feature of the constellation Gemini is a pair of very bright stars that outshine anything else in that area of the sky. For Babylonian astronomers these represented the Great Twins, the gods Lugal-irra and Meslamta-ea. This pair of identical and divine twins was thought to guard the gates of the underworld. Today the bright stars of Gemini are known as Castor and Pollux in honour of another pair of divine brothers.

According to Greek myth Leda was a queen of Sparta who was seduced by Zeus, when he was in the form of a swan. A child was conceived. Yet Leda also became pregnant at the same time by her human husband, King Tyndareus. Leda laid an egg and out hatched two boys - Castor and Pollux. While Pollux was the son of Zeus, and therefore immortal, Castor was the son of the mortal Tyndareus, and had a human lifespan.

When the mortal Castor died his grieving twin Pollux begged Zeus to grant immortality to Castor. Zeus allowed Pollux to share his immortality with his brother. Together the two spent half the year on Mount Olympus and half in the gloomy underworld. Zeus also placed the two together in the sky as the constellation now known as Gemini.

Being a sign of twins, those born under Gemini may feel that they are missing their other half and seek for it in others. Geminis tend to be very sociable and love to talk. By communicating with others they are searching out a companion. The driving force behind Geminis is an intellectual curiosity. They want to know it all.

This can lead some to think of Geminis as lightweight as their minds tend to flit from one topic to another. They may also talk more than is good for them. Yet because of their interest in the world they will always adapt to new situations.

♊

Element: Air
Ruling planet: Mercury
Modality: Mutable
Stars: Castor, Pollux, and Alhena

{ The Twins of Gemini represents a pair of brothers united for eternity. Geminis tend to be people who will link with others. They are sociable, personable, and able to communicate easily. They may be intellectually flighty and always search of new experiences. Geminis may be many things, but they will never be boring. }

© Alamy; Getty

Not all societies have seen a crab in this cluster of stars - but most have recognised it as some creature with a hard exterior

CANCER

Cancer

THE CRAB

The Crab of Cancer represents those who have a tough and rigid exterior but may be hiding a softer personality

21 June – 22 July

Written by Ben Gazur

Cancer is one of the hardest signs of the zodiac to spot in the night sky as it lacks any bright stars that jump out at observers. Some may say this is reflected in the difficulty some may experience when trying to get to know those born under this constellation.

To the ancient Egyptians the stars we call Cancer represented a dung beetle that pushed the Sun across the heavens. Babylonian astrologers thought of this constellation as a turtle or tortoise. It seems that the constellation Cancer has always been associated with creatures who have shells and thick exoskeletons.

In Greek myth the crab of Cancer plays only a very minor role in a much more famous story. The hero Heracles (known as Hercules by the Romans) was sent to kill the Lernaean Hydra – a fearsome beast who grew two heads for every one that was cut off. Hera, who hated Heracles, thought this was not a challenging enough task so in the midst of the battle she sent a giant crab to distract him. Heracles simply smashed his foot down on the crab and carried on. After Heracles was victorious Hera took the remains of her crab and set it in the heavens as the constellation Cancer.

The tragic end of Hera's crab may be reflected in the spiky nature of Cancerians. Their thick shell of emotional coldness conceals a sensitive interior. The fear is that once their insides are exposed they are at risk. Once the shell of a Cancer is breached however by a friend or lover they will find a deep well of emotion and a strongly loyal character.

The negative characteristics of Cancer can be expressed in a melancholy disposition, suspicion, and insecurity. Cancerians are happiest at home, where they feel most protected.

♋

Element: Water

Ruling planet: Moon

Modality: Cardinal

Stars: Acubens, Al Tarf, and Asellus Australis

Cancer is the sign of the Crab and some might find people born under Cancer to be as cold and moody as a crab. Yet beneath their tough carapace Cancers tend to be emotional, sympathetic, and loyal. A crab carries its home on its back and Cancers are never happier than in their own safe space.

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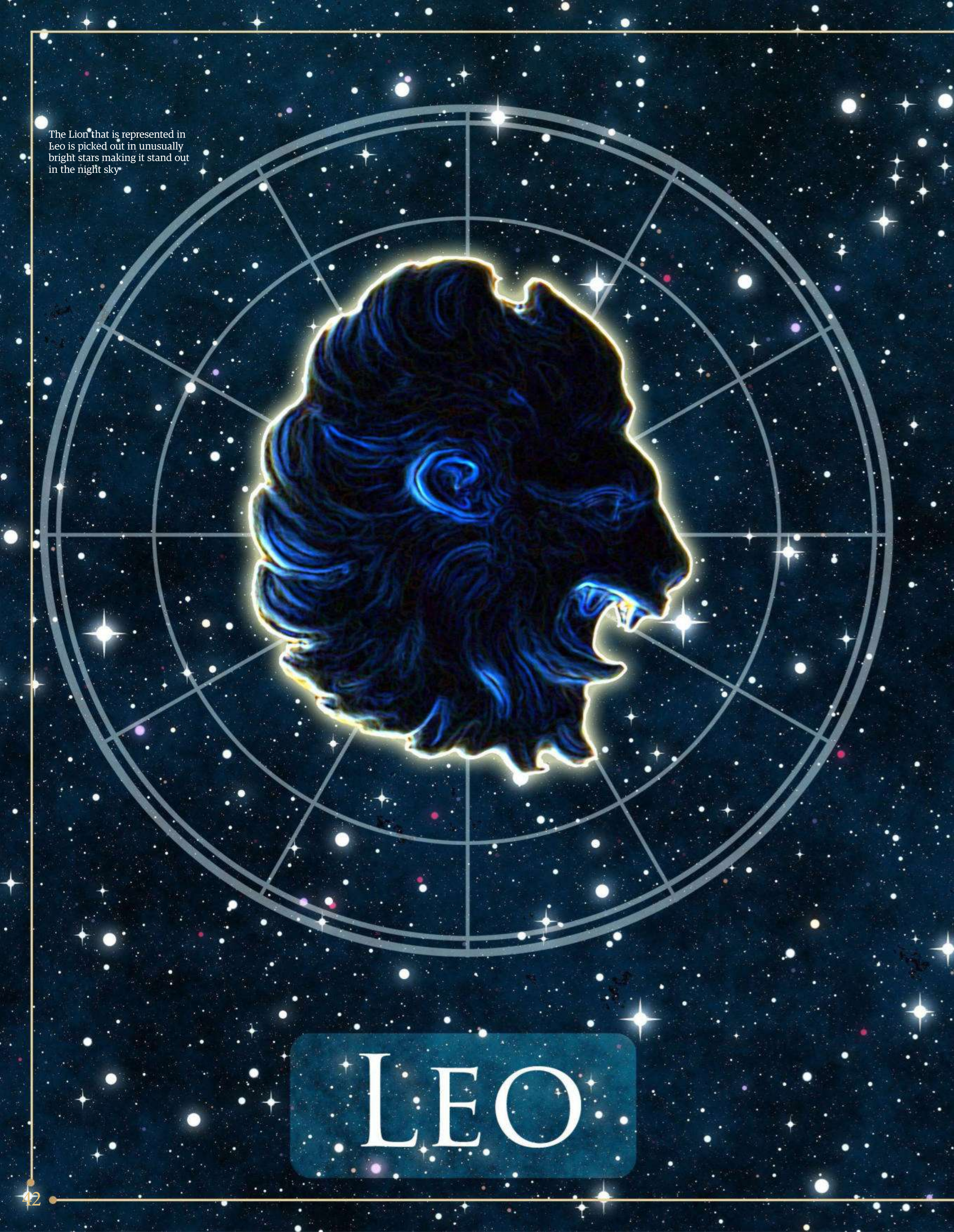


The Lion that is represented in Leo is picked out in unusually bright stars making it stand out in the night sky

LEO

Leo

THE LION

The proud Lion of Leo is the star sign for those born with the confidence to become leaders in any field

22 July - 22 August

Written by Ben Gazur

Just as lions are considered the kings of the beasts so Leo has a regal quality among the signs of the zodiac. Leo is tied to the king of the solar system, the Sun, in astrology. Its brightest star is called Regulus, Latin for Little King. Pride is a quality that would seem natural to such a constellation.

Because Regulus is such an easy star to locate and because this constellation really does look like a lion, Leo is one of the most obvious sights in the night sky. The Babylonians referred to Regulus as 'The King Star' and the constellation as 'The Great Lion'. Almost all cultures have referred to Leo as the Lion.

For the Greeks the constellation memorialised the combat between the hero Heracles (Hercules) and the Nemean Lion. This terrible lion had a pelt that no weapon could penetrate and claws sharper than any mortal blade. When Heracles face the lion his weapons glanced off the unbreakable skin. Eventually Heracles managed to stun the lion with a club and throttle it with his bare hands. The only method of skinning the lion to prove that he'd killed it was to turn its own claws against it. After the lion's defeat Zeus placed it in the sky as the constellation Leo.

Those born under Leo may have many of the positive qualities of a lion - as well as few of its negative traits. Leos are leaders by inclination. They enjoy having attention paid to them and using their abilities to sway others. With a warm outlook and creative spirit they tend to gain followers easily.

Some people might find Leos to be arrogant and concerned only with themselves. When not given the respect they think they deserve a Leo may become petulant. A Leo with a proper understanding of their skills and powers can be great friend and a fierce ally.

Element: Fire

Ruling planet: Sun

Modality: Fixed

Stars: Regulus, Denebola, Algieba

Leo the Lion is one of the most recognisable constellations and those born under it may exhibit the pride of a lion. Leos are natural show-offs who are creative, passionate, and confident. They may also be called arrogant or self-centred. With a skill for entertainment and humour they will never lack for friends.

© Alamy

The astrological symbol for Virgo may link to the wheat she holds and points towards the rewards given to those with practical natures

VIRGO

Virgo

THE MAIDEN

Virgo, the Maiden of the zodiac, represents a hard working, analytical, and practical view of the universe

22 August - 22 September

Written by Ben Gazur

Virgo has been reinterpreted by different cultures over the millennia yet it has always been associated with the harvest. In Babylonian astronomy this constellation was referred to as 'The Furrow' and was thought to represent the goddess of the harvest and the grain she brought forth from the Earth. The brightest star in Virgo is still called Spica, which is Latin for 'ear of grain'.

Many tales are told of how Virgo came to be in the heavens. In the poems of Ovid there is a virgin goddess called Astrea who represented justice, innocence, and purity. She lived among humans when the world was young during the Golden Age. As ages passed and humans degenerated into the Iron Age the world became a darker and more brutal place. Despairing of humanity Astrea fled from Earth and took her place in the heavens as the constellation Virgo. It is thought that one day Astrea will return and we shall live in a second Golden Age.

Other maidens from myth have been associated with Virgo but Astrea perhaps best personifies the character of those born under this sign. Duty, loyalty, and justice are the marks of a Virgo. Unlike Astrea who abandoned Earth this sign of the zodiac has a deep concern with the physical world. They are hardworking and diligent.

The pursuit of perfection may be a downfall. It can be impossible to live up to their standards, which may make relationships with Virgos difficult. Virgos can also be overly analytical. If disappointed they may withdraw. Once a Virgo has learned to tolerate some imperfection however they make for loyal friends and partners who will never stop trying to help those they love.

♍

Element: Earth
Ruling planet: Mercury
Modality: Mutable
Stars: Spica, Zavijava, and Porrima

Virgo, the Maiden, is sometimes linked to the goddess of agriculture. From this figure comes a sense of practicality and hard work often found in Virgos. While they are capable figures there may be a tendency to overwork and be overly critical of the achievements of both others and themselves.

© Alamy; Getty

The Scales of Libra have been intepreted as the scales held by Lady Justice, or Dike the Greek goddess of divine law

LIBRA

Libra

THE SCALES

The balanced Scales of Libra represent those harmonious individuals with a passion for justice and fairness in all things

22 September – 23 October

Written by Ben Gazur

Libra is a constellation that is easy to overlook. It has few bright stars and finds itself hemmed in by Virgo and Scorpio. Arabic astronomers once considered it part of Scorpio and the names of Libra's brightest stars derive from the Arabic for 'Northern Claw' and 'Southern Claw' as a result. But it would be a mistake to overlook Libras.

Other civilisations placed it within the constellation Virgo. As Virgo was considered to represent Astrea, goddess of Justice, Libra was thought to be the scales she carried that represented the concept of fairness. Over time the Scales of Libra became their own constellation and member of the zodiac. It is the only sign of the zodiac that represents an inanimate object.

The Romans viewed Libra as a set of scales and thought it was important to their foundation. According to myth the Moon was in Libra when Rome was founded and this meant that the new city would be one of laws and justice for all. It was also important that the Autumnal Equinox, when days and nights are equal in length, occurred when the Sun was in Libra.

The symbolism of Libra as a set of scales makes interpretation of this sign seem easy – just as the application of justice should be easy. Libra represents balance, equality, and symmetry. Those born under Libra are natural diplomats who see both sides of an argument. Their fair-mindedness make them responsible characters worthy of trust.

Unfortunately some Libras may be frustrated when their opinions and judgments are ignored by others. They can avoid confrontation though, and because Libras need to be around others they are very social and make good, peaceable friends.

Element: Air
Ruling planet: Venus
Modality: Cardinal
Stars: Zubeneschamali, Zubenelgenubi, and Brachium

Libra represents the Scales of justice and those born under this sign will be fair-minded, peacemakers, and cooperative. Seeking balance in all things, Librans will attempt to please everyone. This can turn into a dislike of conflict that sees them avoid troubling issues.

© Alamy; Getty

The astrological symbol for this sign shows the long stinging tail of the Scorpion that lies in wait for those who dare to cross a Scorpio

SCORPIO

Scorpio

THE SCORPION

The fierce Scorpion of Scorpio symbolises the strength, will, and possible dangers of those born under this sign

23 October – 22 November

Written by Ben Gazur

The constellation Scorpius is hard to miss in the night sky. With a long curving tail and several of the brightest stars in the sky it stands out proudly. It was once thought to be far larger than it presently is. Some ancient astronomers thought the constellation Libra actually represented the claws of Scorpius. It is not unusual for a Scorpio to take what they believe is rightfully theirs.

While the Babylonians knew this constellation as 'the one with a burning sting' it is from Greek mythology that most stories of Scorpio developed. These link this sign of the zodiac with the legend of the great hunter Orion. In one version of the myth Orion swore that he could hunt and kill any animal alive. This offended the goddess Gaia who sent a terrible scorpion to battle Orion. After a brutal fight the scorpion was able to fatally sting Orion. To commemorate the combat between the pair they were placed in the heavens. Scorpio and Orion never appear in the sky at the same time. Orion is free to roam during winter but as spring appears Scorpio arrives to chase him. In other versions of the tale it is the huntress goddess Artemis whom Orion displeases.

Scorpios share many of the qualities of the scorpion. They are strong, can cling to things tenaciously, and have the power to back up their ambitions. They are masters at watching the world and waiting for the right moment to strike. Their ability to scan for facts and evidence make Scorpios excellent in analytic careers.

One potential problem for Scorpios is that they may be manipulative. Knowing how others tick they are able to control them. Scorpios make great leaders, just don't get stung.

♏

Element: Water

Ruling planet: Mars/Pluto

Modality: Fixed

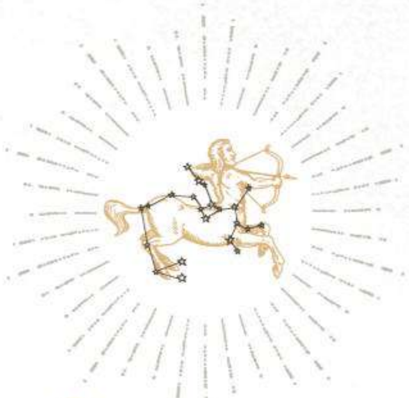
Stars: Antares, Shaula, and Acrab

The Scorpion of Scorpio has fearsome claws and a sting in its tail – and those born under its sign make for dangerous enemies. Scorpios are passionate and powerful. They are strong allies but may prove to be too ambitious or manipulative for some. Be careful not to tread on a Scorpio.

© Alamy; Getty

Sagittarius the archer stands in the heavens with his arrow always pulled and ready to release should Scorpio break from its allotted position.

SAGITTARIUS



Sagittarius

THE ARCHER

The Archer sign of the zodiac represents those who are always scanning for a new target to aim for

22 November – 21 December

Written by Ben Gazur

Sagittarius is the archer of the heavens. Since at least the Babylonians the stars of this constellation have represented someone carrying a bow. To the Babylonians this was the god Nergal, but for the later Greeks the figure behind this constellation was more mysterious.

According to Greek astronomers Sagittarius was either shaped after the centaur Chiron or the son of Pan called Krotos. Chiron is said to have learned archery from the goddess Artemis and was teacher to several famous Greek heroes. Ancient astronomers however suggested Chiron was represented in the heavens by the constellation Centaurus. Krotos meanwhile was a child of the god Pan and is associated with the Muses. As a hunter he is said to have invented archery, and his arrows never missed their target. As a lover of the arts he is said to have invented applause. For his flattery, or appreciation, of them, the Muses convinced Zeus to set Krotos into sky as Sagittarius. Here his arrow is pointed directly at the monstrous heart of Scorpio.

Whichever figure is behind Sagittarius, they both represent key characteristics of those born under this sign. Chiron was a masterful teacher and Sagittarians love to spread knowledge. Krotos was an admirer of the Muses and Sagittarians show a deep understanding of the arts.

Some may find Sagittarians too philosophically minded. Their search for truth can see them thinking in abstractions and missing details. Sagittarians may not like to be tethered to humdrum and everyday life by a partner or friends. But when they do find something to aim their lives at you can be certain they will find their mark.

Element: Fire

Ruling planet: Jupiter

Modality: Mutable

Stars: Kaus Australis, Kaus Borealis, and Nunki

Sagittarius is the Archer of the zodiac and those born under this sign are able to project their mind as sharply as any arrow. Sagittarians are generous and far-thinking individuals. Occasionally they may become lost in their search for truths but they are always willing to share and make great teachers.

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CAPRICORN

Capricorn is an ancient zodiac sign that has long been associated with a hybrid creature that is half goat and half fish

Capricorn

THE SEA GOAT

Capricorn may have the tail of a fish but it represents those with feet firmly on the ground

21 December – 20 January

Written by Ben Gazur

Strange hybrids between goats and fish have been found on Sumerian carvings from at least the 20th century BCE. By the time of the Babylonians the constellation Capricornus was identified with ‘a goat-fish’. There is also a story from Greek mythology that links to this sign of the zodiac.

The god Pan was the lord of the wilderness who had the legs and horn of a goat. He was often called on to help the other gods. When the monstrous Typhon attempted to topple Zeus and the other gods it was Pan who managed to distract the beast. Pan lured Typhon from his lair, escaping the monster by leaping into water and becoming a goat-fish, and allowing Zeus to destroy Typhon with his thunderbolts.

Another myth suggests that Capricorn represents the goat Amalthea who fed Zeus when the infant god was hiding from his murderous father Cronos. Both these tales reveal something of the character of both goats and Capricorns. Goats are hardy and able to defend themselves and those around them, yet they are also nurturing creatures.

Capricorn represents the strengths of both goats and fish, and also a power that can move between elements. Those born under Capricorn are able to call on great internal reserves of strength. Capricorns tend to be responsible, ambitious, and focused. Like a goat lowering its horns and charging nothing can stand between a Capricorn and their goals.. This single-minded pursuit can make Capricorns seem cold and unemotional as the concerns of others do not figure into their calculations. They have a certain stubbornness. Once a bond of friendship has been created however it is best not to threaten either partner.

♑

Element: Earth

Ruling planet: Saturn

Modality: Cardinal

Stars: Deneb Algedi, Dabih, and Alshat

Capricorn represents the Goat of the god Pan, half transformed into fish. Like this mythological creature Capricorns are at home in multiple worlds. Capricorns are pragmatic and responsible figures but they may stray into becoming overbearing characters who feel every task is theirs. Whatever the situation though a Capricorn, can handle it.

© Alamy; Getty

Aquarius has been linked to water since antiquity as its rising coincided with floods and inundations

AQUARIUS

Aquarius

THE WATER BEARER

Aquarius the Water Bearer represents those who bring with them new and refreshing ideas

19 January – 18 February

Written by Ben Gazur

In the ancient world the constellation Aquarius was invariably associated with water. The ancient Egyptians believed that floods came when the Water Bearer dipped his celestial jug into the Nile. Those who lived in Mesopotamia also associated Aquarius with floods – though they were less grateful for them. In Babylonian astronomy Aquarius represented the god of purifying waters Ea. When he sent floods they could be as destructive as they were renewing. This is part of the fluid nature of Aquarius.

To the ancient Greeks Aquarius was Ganymede. This handsome young boy was a prince of Troy. One day Zeus saw the handsome lad and decided to carry him up to Mount Olympus. Zeus transformed into an eagle and plucked Ganymede up to heaven. This is why the eagle constellation Aquila is found beside Aquarius in the night sky. From then on Ganymede served the Greek gods as their cup-bearer, carrying refreshment to whichever deity required it.

Aquarians can feel like they are out of their element. Just as Ganymede was carried away from home so some Aquarians may feel they are not where they belong. Sometimes being an outsider can be a strength; Aquarians are known for their original, and sometimes esoteric, thinking.

Aquarians are natural helpers. Sometimes this will involve helping a single individual but they may also dream of helping the whole world. Humanitarian goals call out to Aquarians. Despite being helpers they may rebel against authority just as a river can sometimes break its banks.

Freedom is of paramount importance to them. Those who attempt to pin them down may find Aquarians slip from their grasp. Once the roving mind of an Aquarian is set on a goal though they will carve a channel through anything in their way.

Element: Air

Ruling planet: Saturn/Uranus

Modality: Fixed

Stars: Sadalsuud, Sadalmelik, and Skat

Aquarius is the Water Bearer of the heavens. Just as Aquarius pours out waters to nourish the world so Aquarians will give of themselves to help others. They are independent thinkers and free like water. They can be as uncontrollable as a river in flood, but there are hidden depths to Aquarius.

© Alamy; Getty

The astrological symbol for Pisces represents two leaping fish springing apart yet held together by a bond

PISCES

Pisces

THE FISH

Pisces, the Fish swimming together, is the sign that most represents community and compassion

18 February – 20 March

Written by Ben Gazur

The constellation Pisces is most often imagined as a pair of fish that are joined together by a rope. This image has been recorded in ancient Egypt of the 2nd millennium BCE and later Babylonian texts. Why these two fish happen to be tied together is not recorded by these earliest sources but later Greek and Roman myths offer some explanations.

When the gods were facing the terrible monster Typhon, it is said that Aphrodite and Eros were far away from the battle. Being gods of love and lust these two deities had little they could do in the face of such a world-crushing threat. Seeking refuge, the pair transformed themselves into fish, tethered together for safety, and leapt into the river Euphrates. This is the moment that was captured in the form of this constellation.

An alternative version has the two fish of Pisces rescuing the gods who rode away on their backs. As a reward for their help the fish were placed in the night sky. Others say that these fish are the ones who rolled an egg out of the Euphrates and it is from this egg that Aphrodite hatched.

The mutable nature of the myths surrounding Pisces is fitting given the changeable nature of Pisceans. The fish at the heart of the constellation can be seen swimming in opposite directions and at the heart of many Pisceans there is a drive pulling them towards different goals.

Pisceans are adaptable people who will feel at home in many groups. Their emotional wisdom and intuition help them to get along with many different people. There is a danger however that they may be led astray because of they are too trusting and may draw back from harsh realities. When swimming with the right partners however Pisceans are truly tied together by unbreakable bonds, just like the celestial Fish.

Element: Water
Ruling planet: Jupiter/Neptune
Modality: Mutable
Stars: Kullat Nunu, Alrescha, and Fum al Samakah

Pisces are the Fish who swim through the heavens. Those born under this sign will be intuitive and enjoy company – just like a shifting school of fish. Pisceans are friendly and open but must be careful not to lose themselves by joining too closely to whoever happens to swim by.

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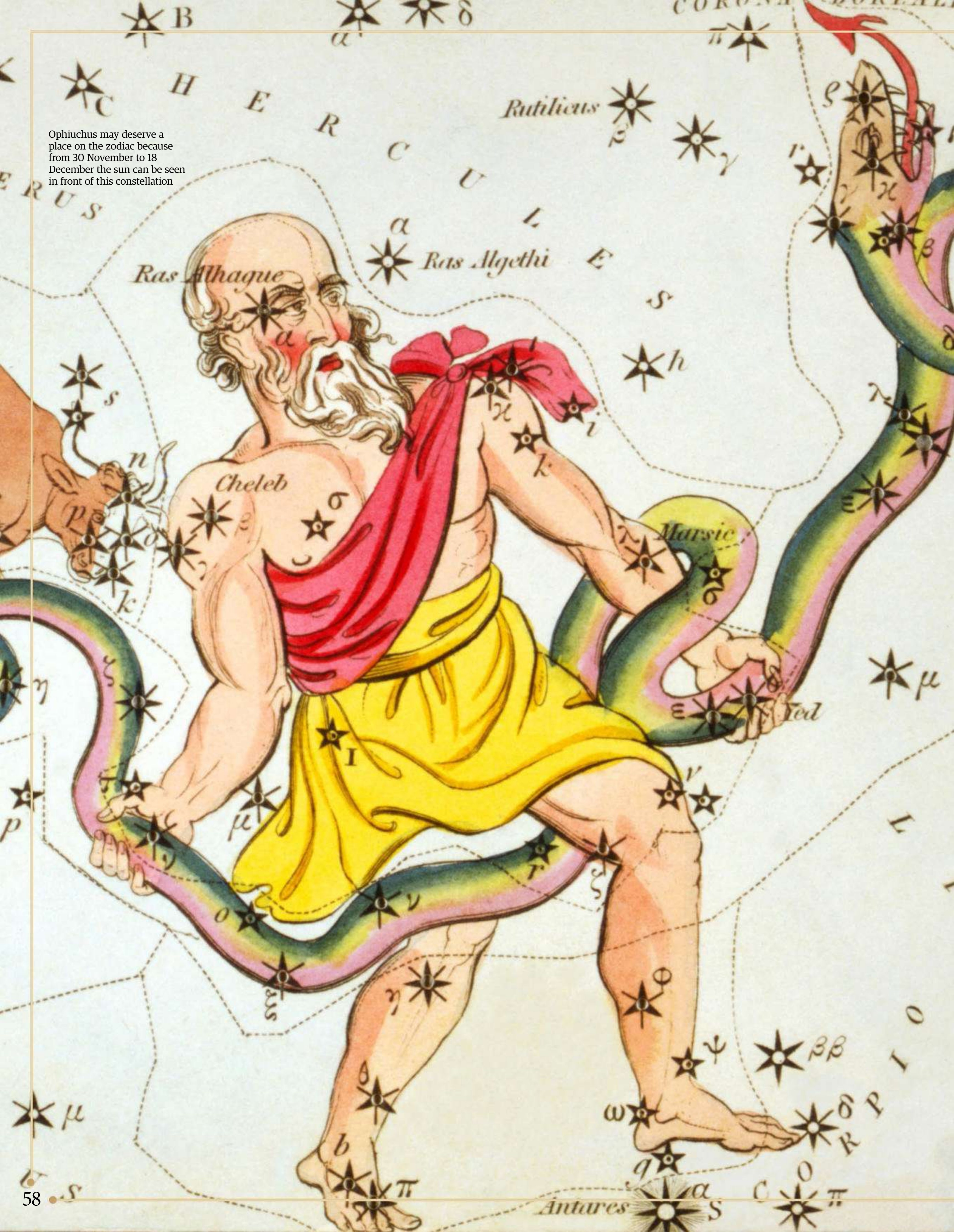
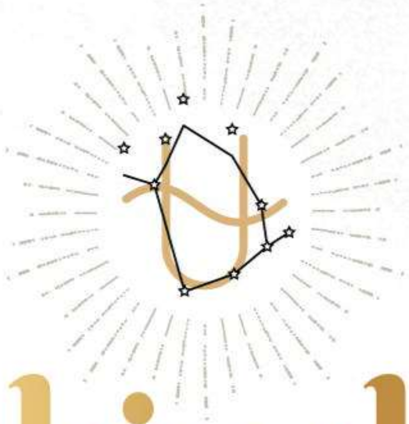

HERCULES
CORONA BOREALIS
Rutilicus
Ras Alhague
Ras Algethi
Cheleb
Marsic
Antares
SCORPIO

Ophiuchus may deserve a place on the zodiac because from 30 November to 18 December the sun can be seen in front of this constellation



Ophiuchus

THE SERPENT BEARER

The '13th' sign of the zodiac, Ophiuchus may make casting astrological charts more complex but also more accurate

30 November - 18 December

Written by Ben Gazur

Interpreting the motions of the heavens is no simple task. While the signs of the zodiac can be traced against the movements of the Sun it is not as simple as pointing to the constellation the Sun happens to be in at any one moment. Since at least the 1970s there have been those who suggest that the current 12-sign zodiac is insufficient. Some think that Ophiuchus should be added, with others also advocating for adding the constellation Cetus.

This has been a controversial suggestion as it would unbalance the Western astrological system that sees signs assigned elements and modalities in equal numbers. A 13th sign would make this impossible. If Orphiucus were added to the zodiac what would it mean?

Ophiuchus is known as the Serpent Bearer because it is said to represent Asclepius, the god of healing, grasping the coils of a vast snake. In Greek mythology Asclepius was the son of Apollo and so wise in the medical arts that he was able to concoct a medicine from snake venom that was so powerful it could raise the dead.

Some saw Ophiuchus as the god Apollo wrestling with the great snake Python. In the ancient world it was said of those born under this sign that "They will receive snakes into the folds of their flowing robes, and will exchange kisses with these poisonous monsters and suffer no harm."

Perhaps those born under Ophiuchus would be brilliant doctors, heroic fighters against great danger, or prophets like those seers at Delphi where Apollo slew Python. It may be that a streak of arrogance would also be present as they might seek to do the impossible - like adding an extra sign to the zodiac.

Element: Uncertain

Ruling planet: Uncertain

Modality: Uncertain

Stars: Rasalhague, Sabik, and Yed Prior

Ophiuchus is represented by human man grasping the snake of the constellation Serpens. Astrologers struggle to define the characteristics of those born under this sign. Based on the myth of Asclepius they may be healers, brave in defence of friends, and possibly a little cold-blooded.

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Cancer
PISCES
ARIES
TAURUS
GEMINI
CANCER
LEO
VIRGO
LIBRA
AQU
CAPRICORN
SAGITTARIUS
SCORPIO
Libra
Gemini
Scorpio
Aries
Taurus
Virgo
Cancer
PISCES
ARIES
TAURUS

PISCES
ARIES
TAURUS
GEMINI
CANCER
LEO
VIRGO
LIBRA
CAPRICORN
SAGITTARIUS
Cancer
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Aries
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Virgo

The planets

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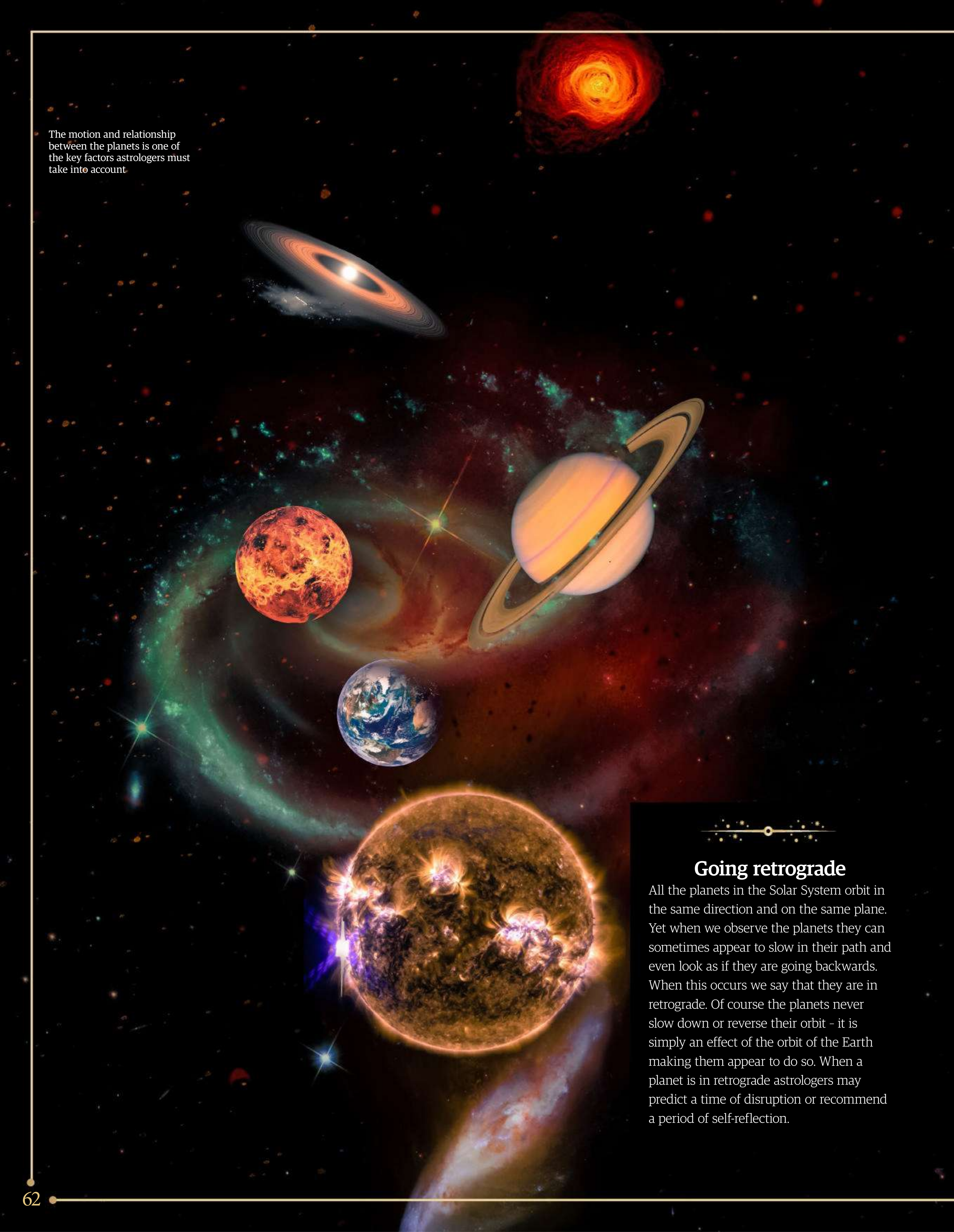


The motion and relationship between the planets is one of the key factors astrologers must take into account

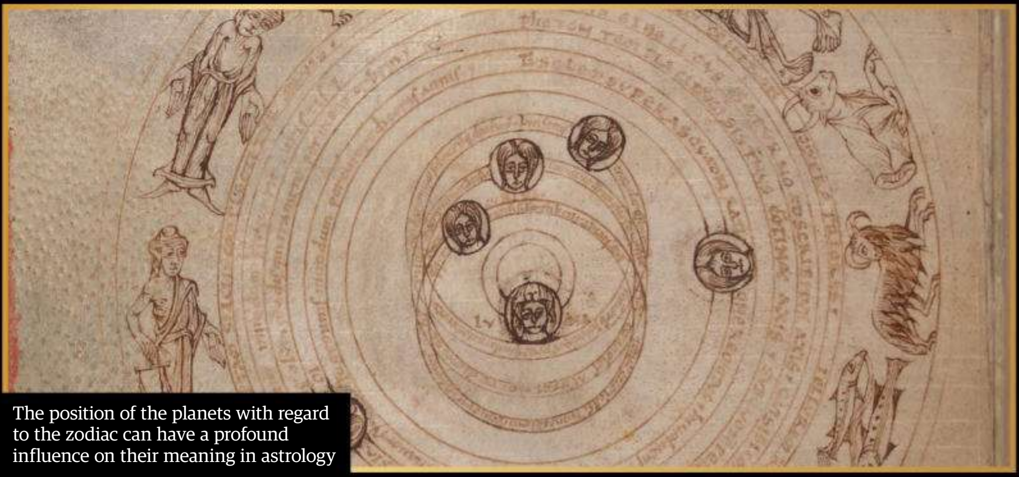
Going retrograde

All the planets in the Solar System orbit in the same direction and on the same plane. Yet when we observe the planets they can sometimes appear to slow in their path and even look as if they are going backwards. When this occurs we say that they are in retrograde. Of course the planets never slow down or reverse their orbit - it is simply an effect of the orbit of the Earth making them appear to do so. When a planet is in retrograde astrologers may predict a time of disruption or recommend a period of self-reflection.

The role of the planets

Astrology relies on a deep understanding of the motion of the heavens – and especially the planets that sweep through the Solar System

Written by Ben Gazur



The position of the planets with regard to the zodiac can have a profound influence on their meaning in astrology

For thousands of years people have recognised that some of the objects that populate the heavens are different. While the fixed stars turn in the night sky with perfect regularity there were some 'wanderers' which followed their own paths. These wandering stars are the planets.

At first only five planets were known to exist as these were the only ones readily visible with the naked human eye. They were placed together with the two brightest objects in the sky, the Sun and Moon, to make up the seven celestial objects that could be used to divine the future through astrological methods.

With the discovery of Uranus in 1781, and then later Neptune and Pluto, the number of objects that must be tracked by astrologers has grown. Western astrologers have separated out the planets into three groups to make sense of their effects.

The Personal planets are the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, and Mars. Because of their relative closeness to the Earth these are the planets that have most influence on our daily lives. The positions of each one may have a role in our mood, our health, and our drives.

The Social planets are Jupiter and Saturn. Being further away from the Earth and moving far more slowly through the heavens they are thought to have effects far beyond the personal. As well as guiding aspects of our lives they may altar how larger groups of people behave.

The Generational planets are those furthest from the Earth: Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto. Their stately progress across the zodiac means they can influence entire generations. They provide the background against which the other planets act.

Some astrologers believe that the planets act directly on us through a force they transmit, while others think that their orderly passage across the sky reflects a deeper order of the universe that we can read. However you interpret them, people have always looked to the planets for guidance.

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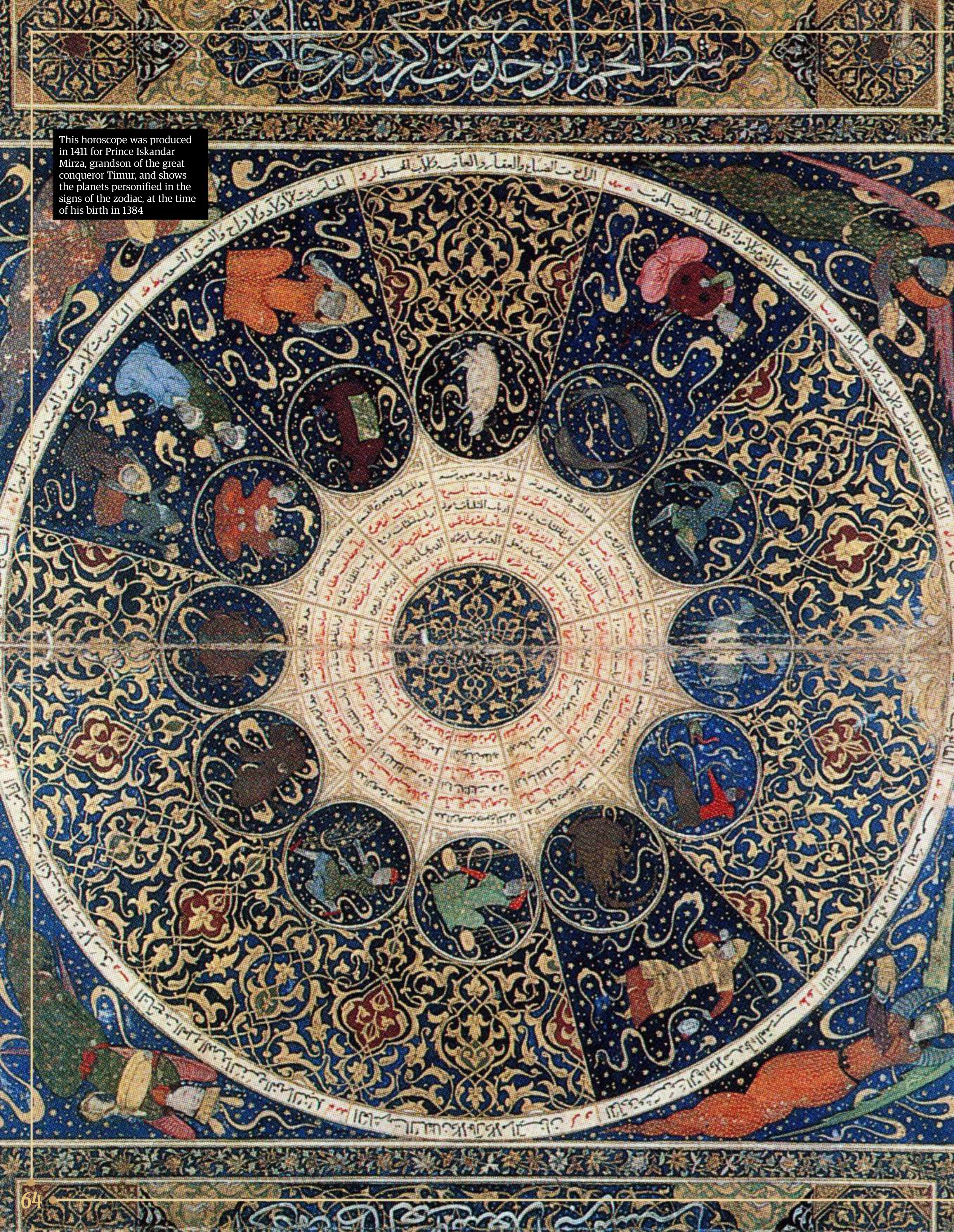


This horoscope was produced in 1411 for Prince Iskandar Mirza, grandson of the great conqueror Timur, and shows the planets personified in the signs of the zodiac, at the time of his birth in 1384

Planets in the signs

As the planets move along their orbits, they move through the signs of the zodiac, and this has a bearing on the horoscope

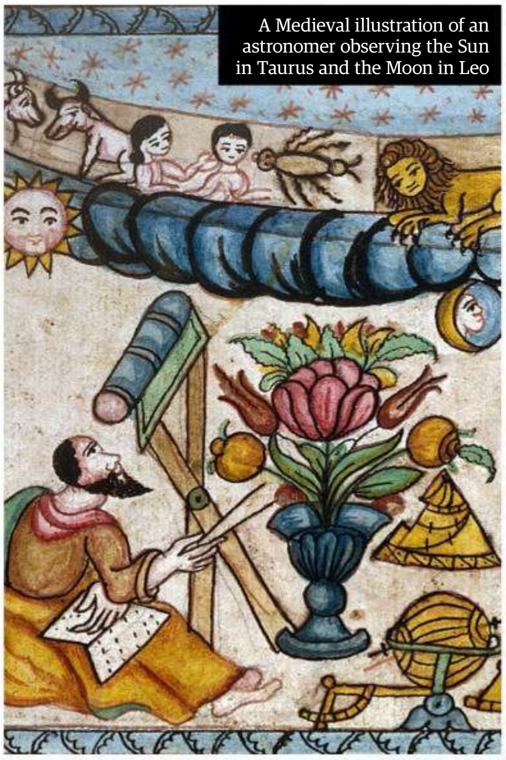
Written by April Madden

On their journey through the wheel of the zodiac, the planets move through each of the signs. Some of these placements are known as their Essential Dignities: the most common ones are the rulership or domicile, the detriment, the exaltation, and the fall. Other less-used ones are the triplicity, the face, and peregrine.

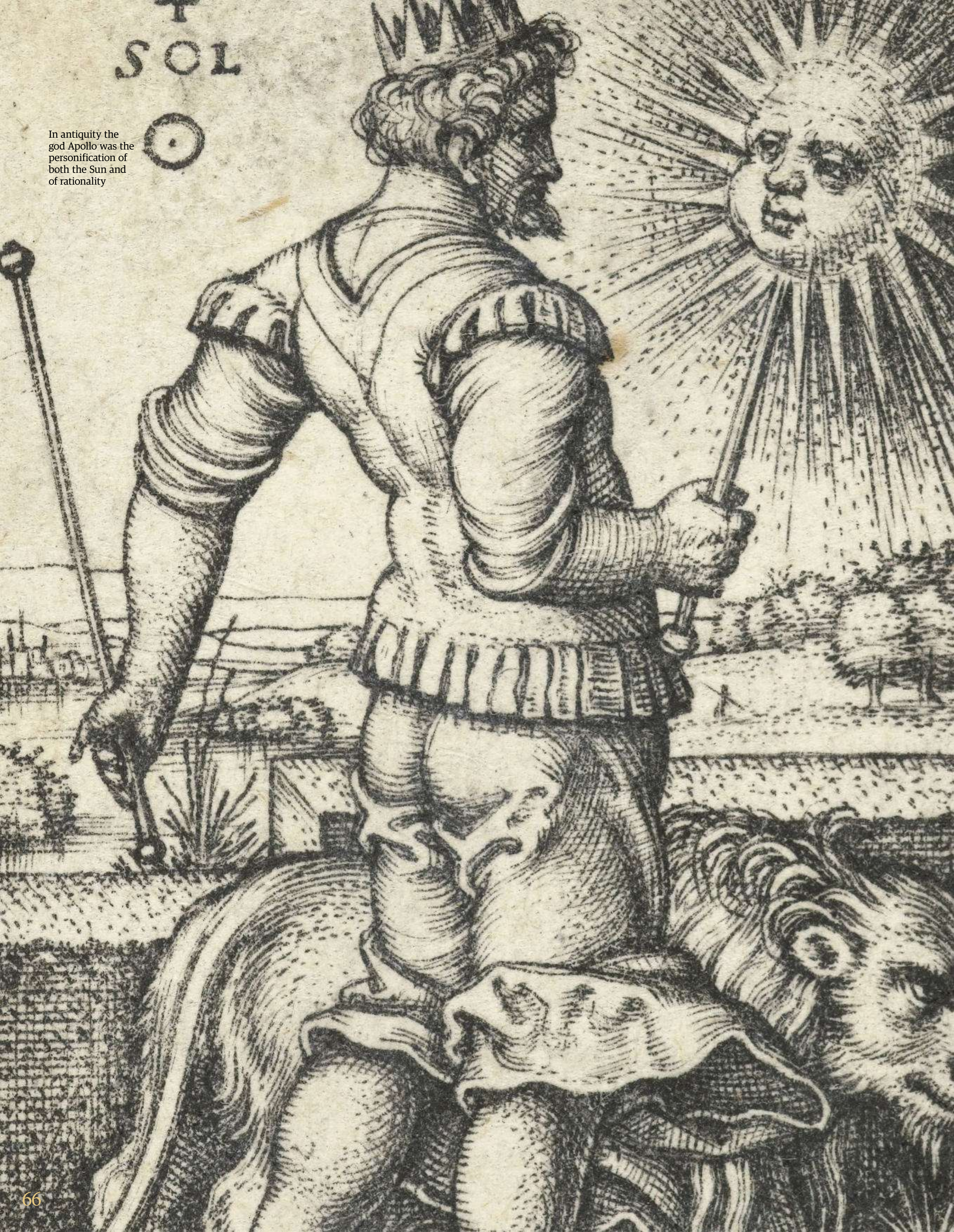
The domicile, or rulership, means the sign that a planet rules. It's considered lucky to have a planet in the sign that it rules in your chart. The detriment is the sign opposite the sign a planet rules, and here astrologers believe that the planet's benign influences are constrained and swamped. The exaltation is a sign that the planet doesn't rule, but whose meaning and influence align well with the planet's and reflect joy and fortune. The fall is the sign opposite a planet's exaltation, its unhappiest and most uncomfortable location. Triplicity can get very complicated: it comes from classical astrology and assigns each sign one non-luminary planetary ruler by day, and another by night, based on their ruling elements – Solar Sect signs are the air and fire signs, while Lunar Sect signs are the earth and water ones. The planets also have an elemental association; it's best when their placement matches up with it. Some Medieval systems assign three rulers for each sign, a day, night, and participating ruler. Face can be even more complex, as it divides each sign into thirds and gives each of these its own individual character, which affects a planet's influence. Finally, the peregrine is where the planet is far from its home signs and elements, or from their opposites – it is neither dignified nor debilitated. The term peregrine means 'wandering'. You'll find the four common Essential Dignities for each planet listed on their individual pages in the Planets section of this book.

As well as the Essential Dignity, there is also Accidental Dignity, when a planet is in one of the Angular Houses in someone's chart. These are the houses in which the angles of their chart are found: Midheaven, and its opposite Imum Coeli, and the Ascendant and Descendant. This is unique to every individual horoscope.

Whether a planet is dignified, at detriment, or neither, its placement in a chart is thought to denote certain characteristics. The location of Mercury rules communication, Venus love, Mars action, Jupiter growth, Saturn discipline, Uranus innovation, Neptune dreams, and Pluto transformation. The two luminaries are also treated as planets: the Sun rules identity and the Moon emotion.


A Medieval illustration of an astronomer observing the Sun in Taurus and the Moon in Leo

© Alamy



In antiquity the god Apollo was the personification of both the Sun and of rationality

The Sun

The Sun, giver of life, is central to both the Solar System and systems of astrology due to the power of its influence

Written by Ben Gazur

It has long been apparent that the most important object in our heavens is the Sun. Each day is defined by its rising and setting, just as each year is defined by its return to the same spot in the heavens. Even before it was understood that the Earth orbits around the Sun it was understood that its influence on human affairs was huge.

In astrology the Sun defines your sun sign. As the Earth revolves around the Sun it appears as if the Sun is moving through the 12 signs of the zodiac. Where it is on the day of your birth determines your sign. Each sign of the zodiac is home to the Sun for approximately one month of each year.

As the astrological symbol for the Sun shows, the Sun is central to reading horoscopes. The centrality of the Sun has traditionally seen it interpreted as the ruler of the heavens. It also represents the rule of the self and our individuality. When the Sun is well placed people make better decisions and are more capable of governing themselves.

Traditionally the Sun has been related to male figures and when the Sun is poorly positioned it may signify that troubles will come from the men in your life. Today astrologers may read the Sun as representing any person in authority but it especially signifies the ability to make wise choices.

The Sun radiates warmth, light, and energy and can be thought of as having a health-giving role in our lives. This role may be both physical and mental. The Sun, given its important position in the sky, is said to rule the heart. Nicholas Culpeper, writing in the 17th century, said "The Vital spirit hath its residence in the heart… and is governed by the influence of the Sun."

Type: Luminary

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Leo
- *Detriment:* Aquarius
- *Exaltation:* Aries
- *Fall:* Libra

The Sun represents ourselves, our minds, our egos, and our rationality. As the Sun guides the motions of the other planets so it has influence over leaders and decision-making. It is the Sun which rules how we project ourselves into the world and gives us confidence to face challenges.

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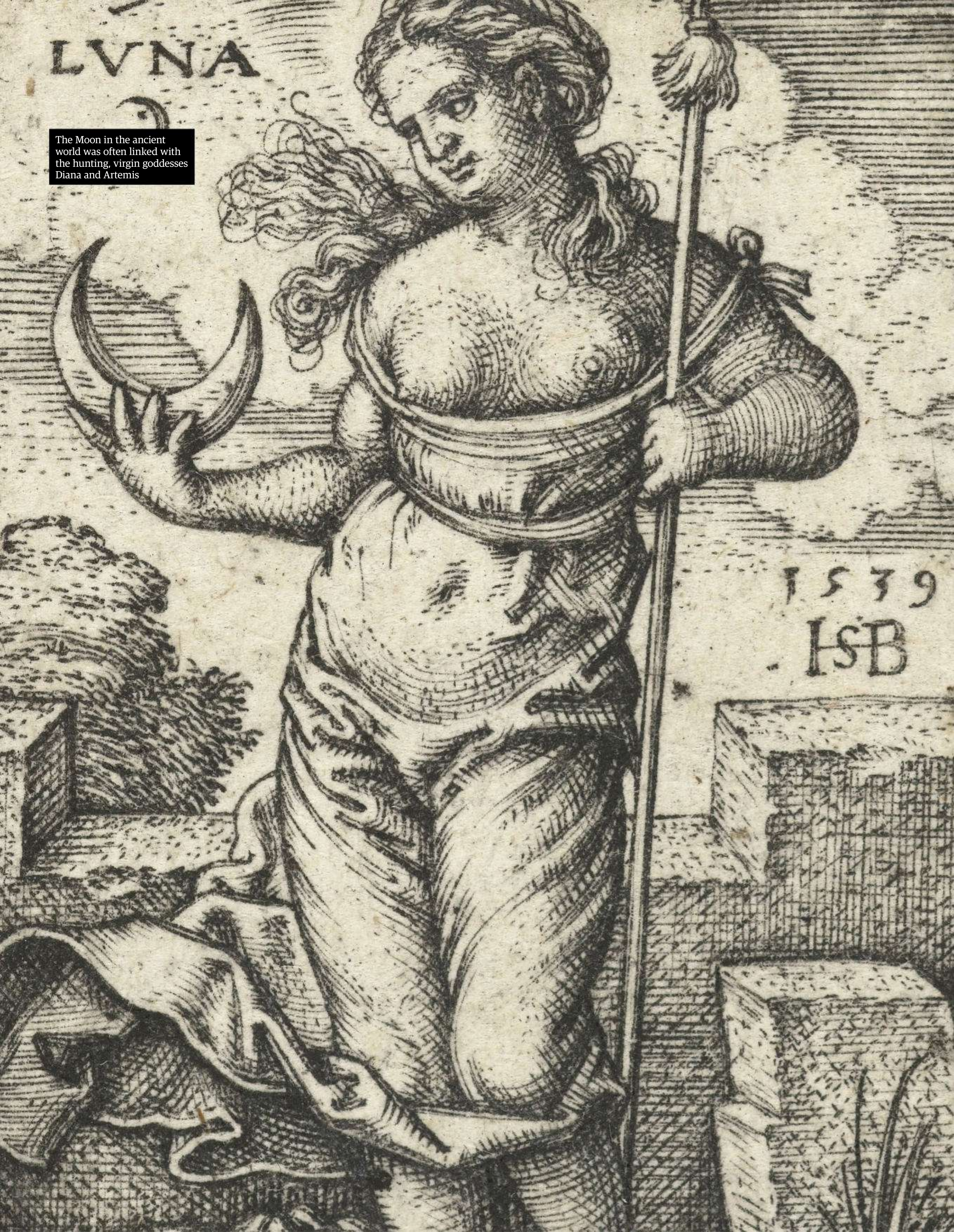
LVNA
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The Moon in the ancient world was often linked with the hunting, virgin goddesses Diana and Artemis

The Moon

The ever changing Moon represents the shifting nature of our emotions and desires as it waxes and wanes

Written by Ben Gazur

The Moon is the closest celestial object to Earth and has a dramatic impact on it. Twice each day the tides rise and fall as the gravity of the Moon pulls at the oceans. The monthly cycle of the Moon's phases as it waxes and wanes once helped to define how people recorded time.

The direct influence of the Moon on the natural world is reflected in its importance in the astrological world. The ability of the Moon to churn up the deep waters of the sea is an echo of its ability to stir up our emotions. Its variable nature is seen in the way our emotions can be quick to change. Unlike the Sun's stately waltz, the Moon zips through the zodiac - spending only two and a half days a month in each sign.

The Moon is often viewed as a feminine influence in astrology, possibly due to the Moon's apparent synchronicity with the menstrual cycle. This places it as a counterpart to the Sun's masculine aspect. Both the Sun and Moon appear to be exactly the same size in the sky which suggests a perfect balance between their energies.

The power of the Moon over our mental state explains why madness used to be referred to as lunacy. The Moon in astrology is sometimes viewed as the irrational power. This is not to say that it is lesser than the rational Sun, for our emotions are vital to our well being.

Historically the Moon is said to have ruled the female body but it was also thought to control the fluids of the body, just as it controls the tides. Astrologers will look to the position of the Moon to explain physical and mental health. As the Moon orbits, grows, or shrinks it may impact on your body or mind.

* * *

Type: Luminary

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Cancer
- *Detriment:* Capricorn
- *Exaltation:* Taurus
- *Fall:* Scorpio

The Moon is the fastest moving astrological object in the sky and grows and diminishes on a monthly cycle. This mutability represents our inner lives and the changes we all go through. The flow of the Moon reflects our instincts and personal energy levels.

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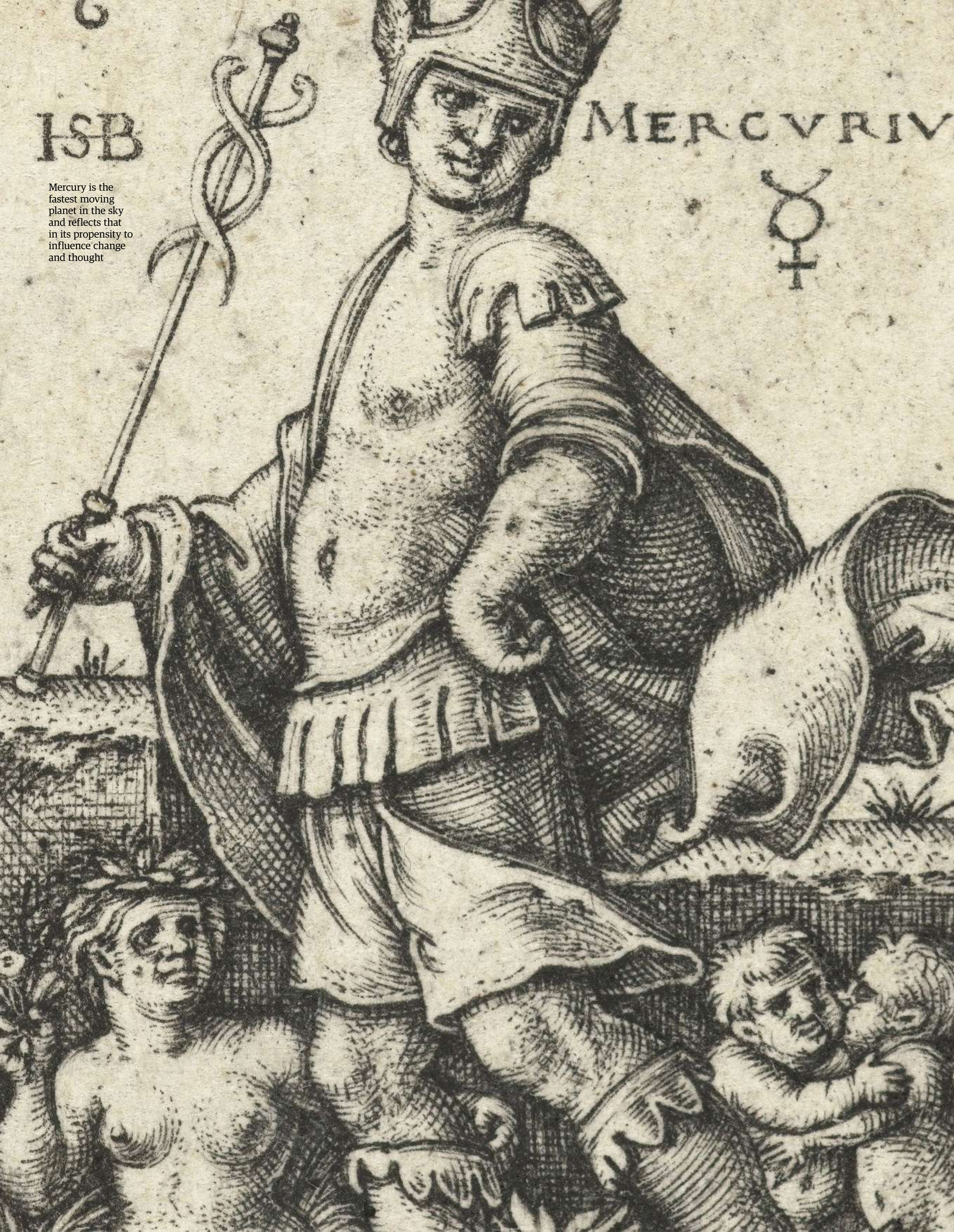
ISB
MERCVRIV

Mercury is the fastest moving planet in the sky and reflects that in its propensity to influence change and thought

Mercury

Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun, acts as a messenger between the heavens and the Earth

Written by Ben Gazur

Because of Mercury's position so close to the Sun it is often completely hidden from the view of Earth. When it is visible Mercury only appears for a short period around sunrise or sunset. It orbits the Sun in a mere 88 days and so often appears to be in retrograde – moving backwards – when seen from Earth. This is just one of the mercurial aspects of Mercury.

Mercury, like the messenger god it was named for, is quick and changeable. This can be a good thing, as the influence of Mercury may help a person to think quickly, sort information, and try new things. On the other hand it may make a person restless and Mercury in retrograde could cause miscommunications to skyrocket.

Mercury is the planet of communication. Examining how it appears in a horoscope can reveal a great deal about how personal relationships will develop. Its location close to the Sun reflects how our minds interact with the wider world. While the Sun represents our innermost selves it is Mercury that must express our thoughts. Language, both written and verbal, is in the power of Mercury as they are our most important methods of expressing ourselves.

As the planet of thought Mercury is considered to be neither masculine or feminine. Instead it takes on the gender of whichever zodiac sign it is residing in. This helps to explain the universal power of this planet over all individuals.

In medicinal astrology the brain and nerves are considered to be especially influenced by Mercury. This may be a positive conjunction leading to clear-sighted reasonableness – or the flighty nature of Mercury may be to blame for instability.

* * *

Type: Inner Planet

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Gemini/Virgo
- *Detriment:* Sagittarius/Pisces
- *Exaltation:* Virgo
- *Fall:* Pisces

Mercury is the quicksilver planet that is capable of swift changes as it rapidly orbits the Sun. It represents communication and thought. As it is so close to the Sun it reflects the solar aptitude for reasoning. Mercury influences the written word, learning, and all forms of self-expression.

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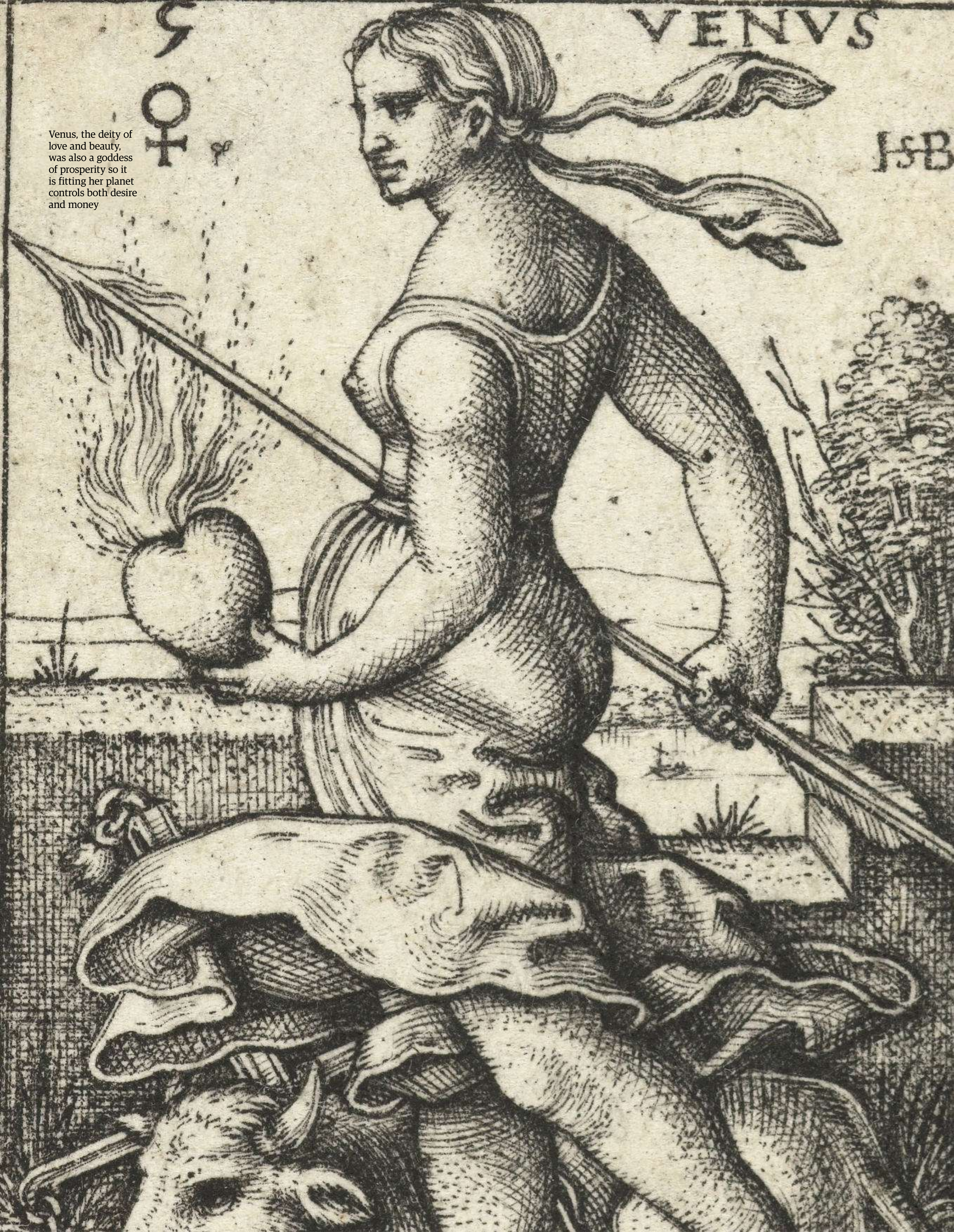

Venus, the deity of love and beauty, was also a goddess of prosperity so it is fitting her planet controls both desire and money

Venus

Venus, named for the goddess of love, rules the passions of people as it shines down on Earth

Written by Ben Gazur

Aside from the Sun and Moon, Venus is the brightest object in the night sky. Named for the Roman goddess of love, this planet rules the emotions of passion. The planet is hidden beneath a thick and reflective layer of clouds and sometimes our affections can be just as mysterious as this planet.

Venus plays an impressive trick on observers from Earth. Sometimes it appears just before sunrise, sometimes it disappears, and then sometimes it appears just after sunset. Because of this the ancients recognised Venus as both the Morning and the Evening Star. This slightly fickle nature may have reminded some early astrologers of the changing face of love.

Venus is regarded as the planet that rules our desires. As it moves throughout the zodiac its influence can focus our attention on pursuing various different goals associated with each sign. The astrological role of Venus encompasses not just romantic relationships but also partnerships of all types. When Venus goes into retrograde it can portend a crisis in a relationship.

As the only planet named for a female figure it is often said that Venus carries feminine energies. Some astrologers have dealt with this inherently feminine nature by suggesting that the role of Venus in men's charts is not directly felt but is rather reflected in their relationships with women. Other astronomers prefer to suggest men should listen to what Venus is telling them specifically.

The influence of Venus is often felt towards material objects and luxuries. Yet Venus also brings harmony between different things by mediating between ourselves and our desires.

In the body Venus is said to rule the reproductive organs but also those of the digestive system. Mentally we may search out our deepest desires when under the control of Venus.

♀

Type: Inner Planet

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Libra/Taurus
- *Detriment:* Aries/Scorpio
- *Exaltation:* Pisces
- *Fall:* Virgo

{ Venus governs our relationships with both love and money. Beyond these two main influences Venus can also determine how we pursue pleasure of all sorts, as well as our tastes and desires. The beauty of Venus in the sky reflects its power over our senses. }

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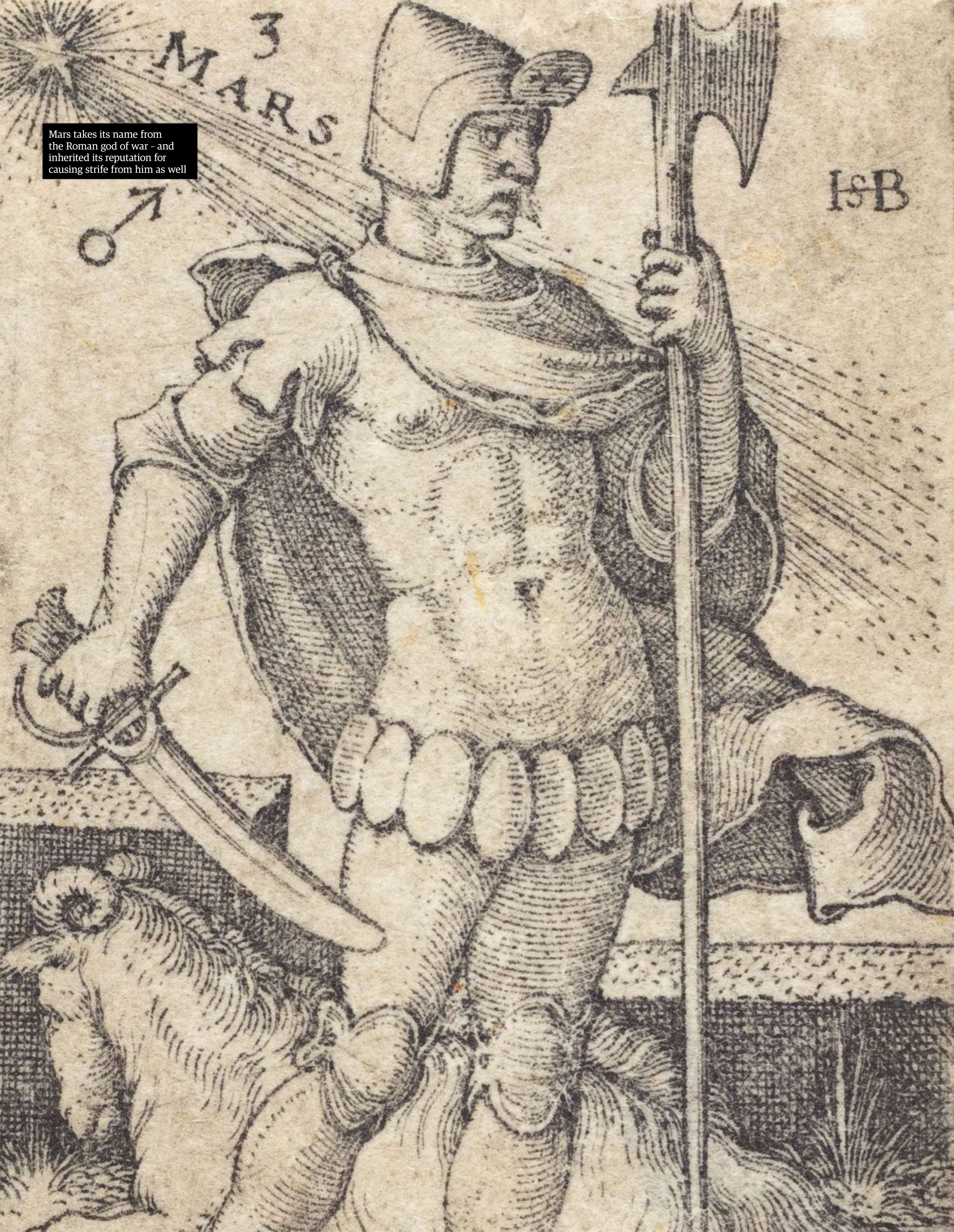

Mars takes its name from the Roman god of war - and inherited its reputation for causing strife from him as well

Mars

The planet Mars is the active energy of the astrological cosmos - with either positive or negative consequences

Written by Ben Gazur

Mars can be easily identified from the other planets because it often twinkles with a reddish hue. The Red Planet may originally have been linked to the god of war because of this bloody colouration. In fact the planet and blood are both red because they contain high amounts of the element iron. The fiery nature of Mars however goes far beyond its appearance.

In astrology Mars is the planet of action. It also represents the unconscious parts of our minds and the instincts we may try to keep concealed. Mars has long been linked to warfare and strife. As a repository of anger, passion, and conflict it may seem to be a wholly negative influence. Yet Mars is also a planet of drive and courage that can be beneficial if directed towards a proper goal. Being aware of our basic instincts helps to master them.

In Greek and Roman myth the gods Venus and Mars were often pictured as being involved in a tempestuous affair. In astrology it is Venus that deals with love, but Mars that influences sexual passions. These deeply seated desires can be turned to other ends though as Mars travels through the zodiac in its two year long orbit.

When Mars is in retrograde all of the areas under its control may weaken. This can be a frustrating period when all ambitions may seem dampened. Aggressive feelings may be misplaced and conflicts arise over trivial events.

Given the iron that gives Mars its colour it is appropriate that Mars is thought to govern the health of our arteries. The strength of out muscles is also under the control of Mars. Choler, the bodily humour thought to lead to peevishness, was closely linked to Mars' quarrelsome nature.

♂

Type: Inner Planet

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Scorpio/Aries
- *Detriment:* Taurus/Libra
- *Exaltation:* Capricorn
- *Fall:* Cancer

Mars represents the striving and competitive aspects of human nature. The most basic drives of humanity are controlled by Mars - perhaps even our animal instincts. War and aggression find their expression through Mars' influence but so do our enthusiasms and adventurous spirit.

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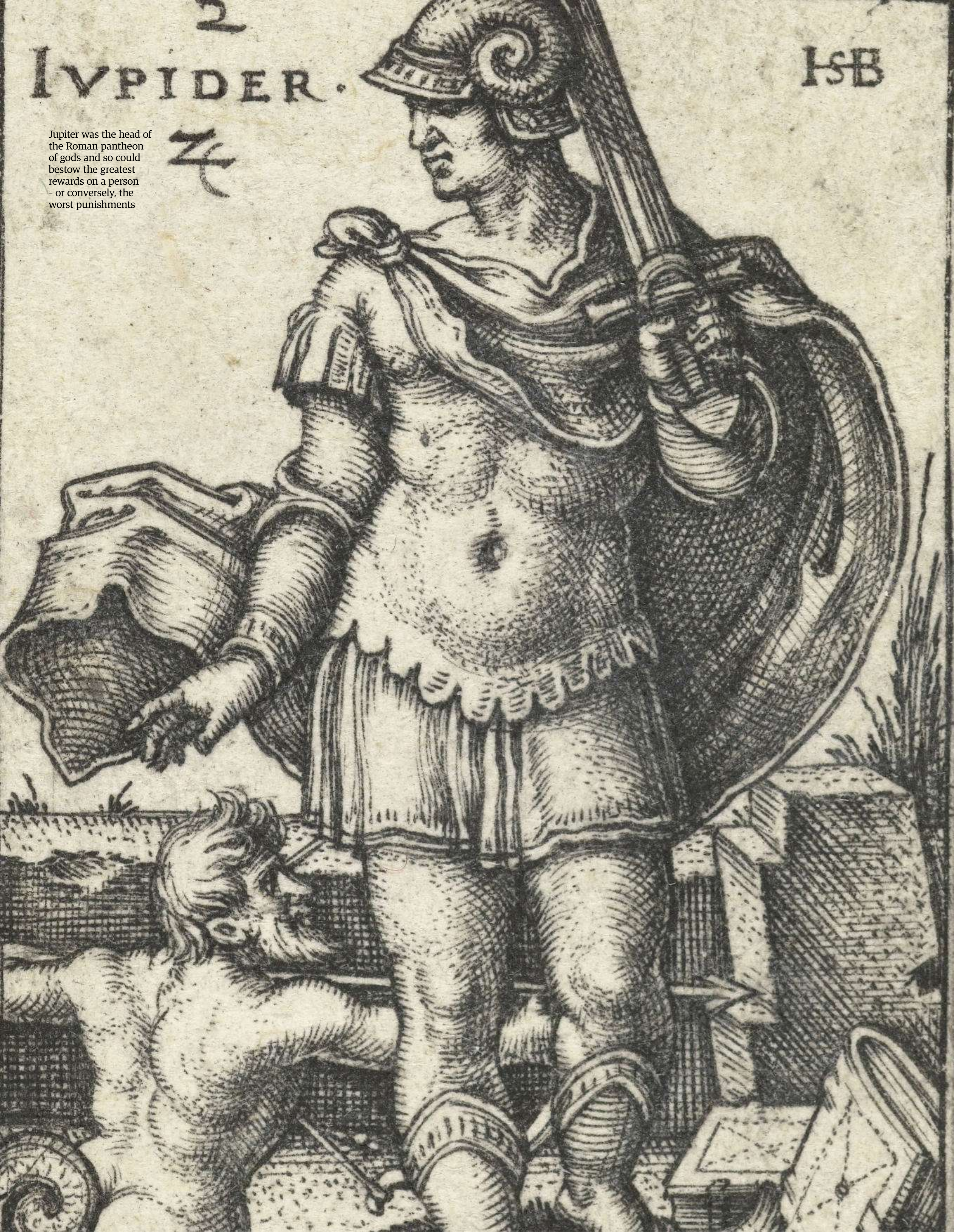

Jupiter was the head of the Roman pantheon of gods and so could bestow the greatest rewards on a person – or conversely, the worst punishments

Jupiter

Jupiter, the king of the heavens, is a planet of bounty, good fortune, and luck – and sometimes over-excess

Written by Ben Gazur

It is hard to overstate the effects of Jupiter. On a purely physical scale it is such a massive planet that it is not strictly true to say that it orbits the Sun. Both the Sun and Jupiter orbit a point between them as their gravitational pulls tug against each other. It is little wonder then that Jupiter has an oversized role in astrological interpretations.

Jupiter is the first of the Social Planets – those who have a wider influence than the merely personal. Jupiter takes 12 years to orbit the Sun, spending a year in each sign as it waltzes around the zodiac. It creates astrological situations that can have effects for society at large. Morality, justice, and benevolence may all follow its rhythms.

That is not to say that Jupiter is an impersonal planet. As the planet of plenty its influence on individuals can be powerful. Luck and accomplishments are personal benefits that Jupiter may bestow. It is said that Jupiter is never a malicious actor, though it may cause troubles if its gifts are given too freely. A desire for too much of Jupiter's bounty can easily turn to greed.

Because Jupiter is a planet associated with wisdom and spirituality, times when Jupiter is in retrograde can be useful as moments for introspection. Jupiter bridges the space between the individual and the wider world so Jupiter in retrograde can help to reset our relationships and redefine our goals in life.

Jupiter may encourage a certain bonhomie and temptation to enjoy a tipple. It may be fitting then that in the body Jupiter holds sway over the liver. The overindulgence that can follow if Jupiter is overactive is something most doctors would suggest be avoided.

♃

Type: Outer Planet

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Sagittarius/Pisces
- *Detriment:* Gemini/Virgo
- *Exaltation:* Cancer
- *Fall:* Capricorn

> Jupiter represents some of the most positive aspects of fate. Good fortune, plenty, and optimism are all under the sway of this planet. The jovial nature of Jupiter can sometimes become a negative when it leads us into indulgence and excess. At its best though Jupiter is the planet of wisdom.

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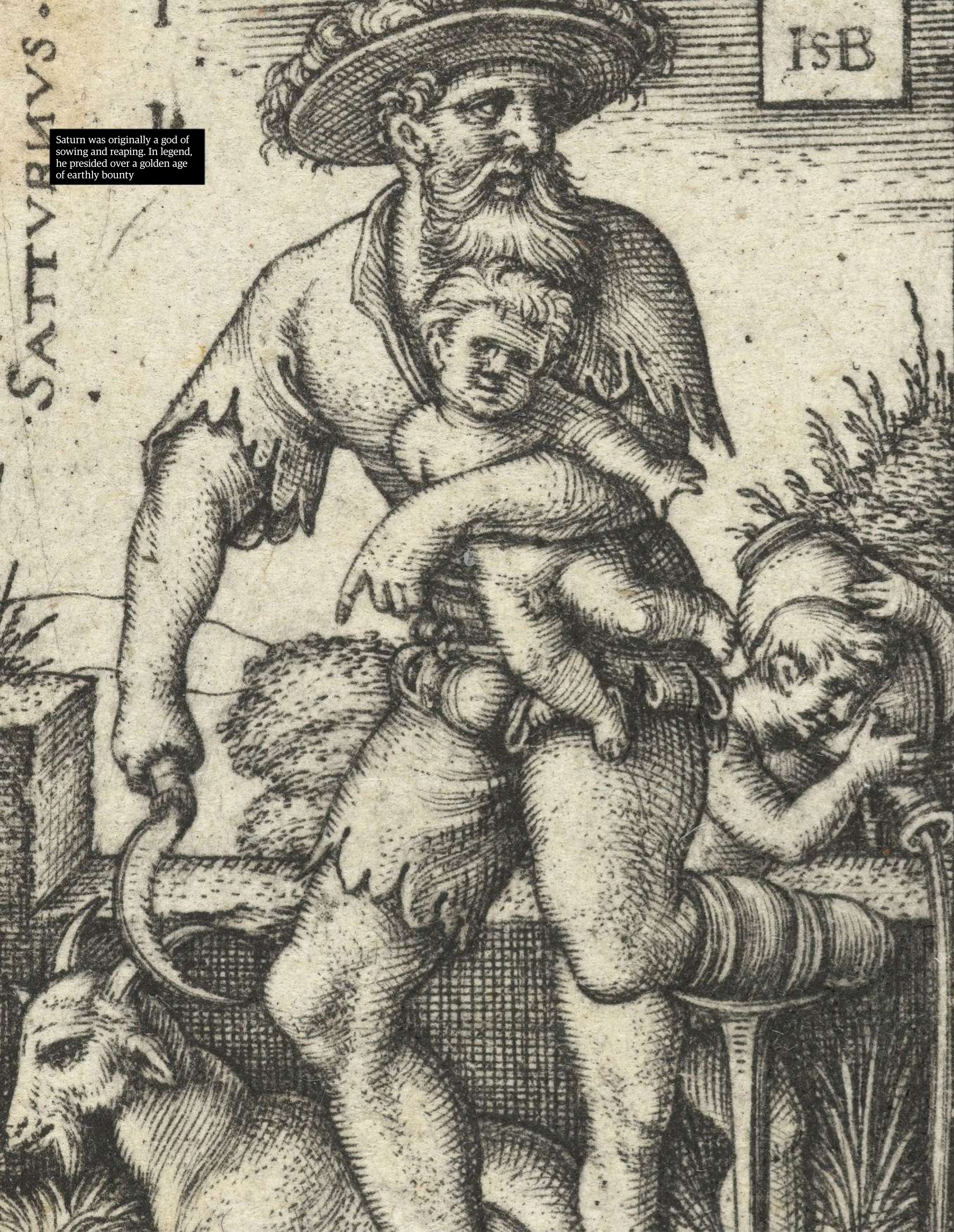
SATTVRNVS
ISB

Saturn was originally a god of sowing and reaping. In legend, he presided over a golden age of earthly bounty

Saturn

The most beautiful planet in the Solar System may have the most complex, and potentially dark, role in all of astrology

Written by Ben Gazur

The magnificent ring systems of Saturn have beguiled astronomers for centuries. Close up images show uncountable numbers of tiny fragments orbiting the planet in thin rings. Astrology sees this orderly structure as pointing to Saturn's role in the rigid aspects of conformity and limitation.

Saturn is the last of the planets that can be seen easily with the naked eye, so in traditional astrology it was the outermost of the planets for millenia. It sits at the border of the humanly knowable Solar System. Its slow, 29-year orbit of the Sun marks a boundary, and in astrology Saturn acts to place limits on human life. These limits can be seen as constrictions on our possibilities. The influence of Saturn tends to hold us back from going too far, daring too much, or dreaming too expansively. Saturn brings us back to reality – sometimes with a bump.

Yet Saturn is not a wholly maleficent planet. While it places limits these can sometimes be useful in our lives. Saturn gives rules and structure which can help to create clarity of purpose. Discipline is necessary to achieve our goals and Saturn can provide this. Saturn is often thought of as a teacher, even if it is a slightly harsh one. As the ruler of old age it is to Saturn that we must look to for maturity and authority.

When Saturn is in retrograde it can be a good time to examine plans and aspirations. It may be a time to change direction. Times of retrogression for Saturn are when people may receive rewards for the good deeds they have done – and punishments for the less good. Given Saturn's rule of old age, it has been linked to all sorts of medical issues. Some even blame it for poisonings. In the past it was thought to govern the humour melancholy that caused depression.

♄

Type: Outer Planet

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Capricorn/Aquarius
- *Detriment:* Cancer/Leo
- *Exaltation:* Libra
- *Fall:* Aries

Saturn represents boundaries, limits, and constriction. While these may be negative traits they help to create definition for our lives and point towards our duties and responsibilities. Saturn is also related to the aging process and old age in particular. Saturn influences the material world, careers, and organisations.

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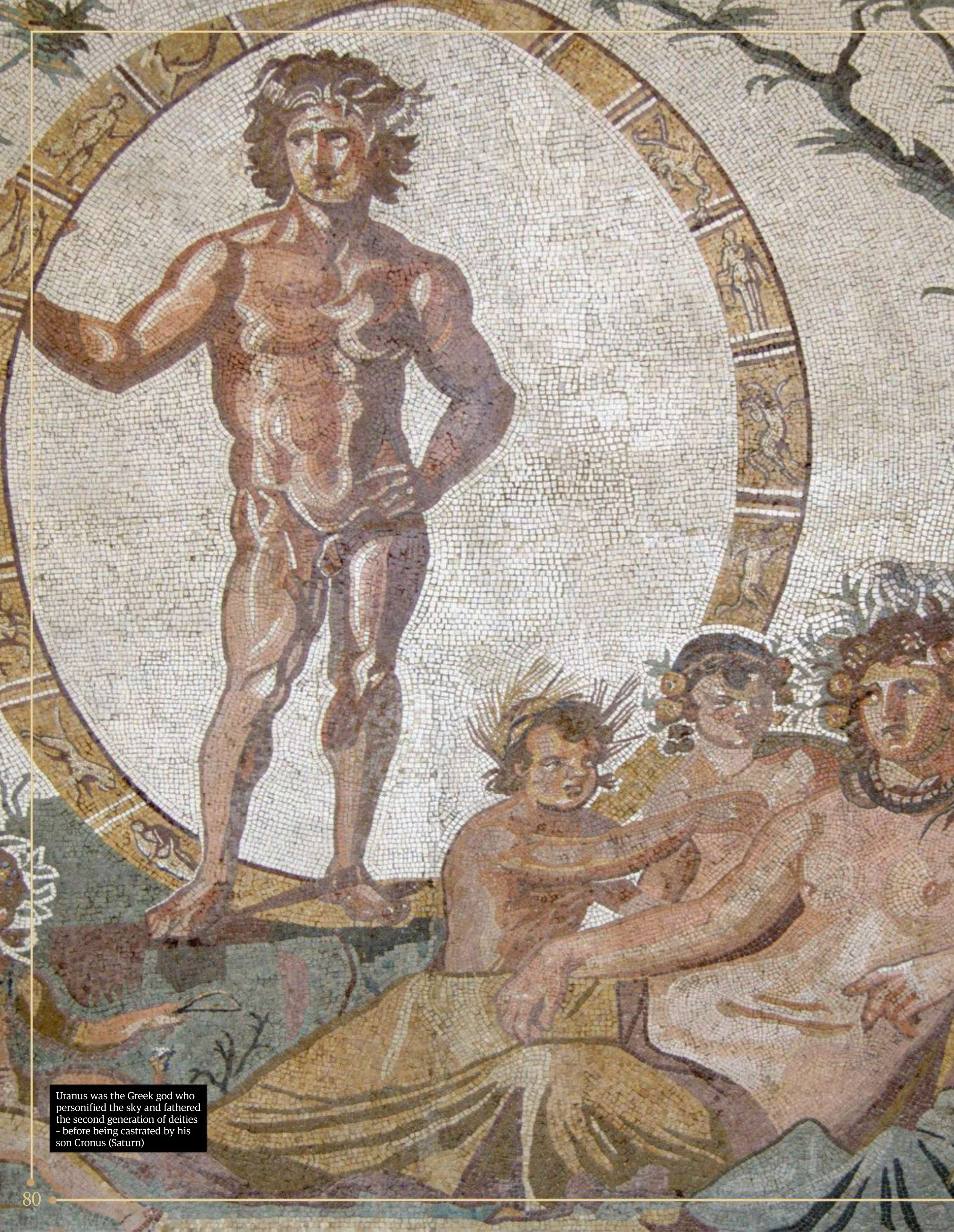

Uranus was the Greek god who personified the sky and fathered the second generation of deities - before being castrated by his son Cronus (Saturn)

Uranus

The first planet discovered since antiquity, Uranus brings with it originality and new breakthroughs

Written by Ben Gazur

When William Herschel discovered Uranus in 1781 he expanded the known size of the Solar System for the first time in recorded history. This offered both a challenge to astrologers, who had to incorporate it into their calculations, but also an opportunity for greater understanding.

When trying to uncover what role Uranus could play in astrology the spirit of the age was considered. One of the dominant cultural movement of the late 18th century was Romanticism. The Romantics placed great importance on individuality, unpredictability, and inspiration. It was also a time of experimentation in electricity. Here, then, was clearly a planet of power and innovation.

With its leisurely 84-year orbit this would prove to be a planet with influence far beyond our personal lives. As Uranus spends so long in each sign of the zodiac it effects whole generations of people. Individuals can still be influenced by Uranus if it plays a particularly strong role in their birth chart.

On the social level Uranus can trigger reform of government. It may spark an age of invention and breaks with tradition. Uranus is deeply involved with genius in individuals. Those born under the influence of Uranus may seem otherworldly to others but that is only because they tend to break free from old modes of thinking.

While grand changes in society can be positive there is also the risk that those guided by Uranus may be reckless in their revolutionary schemes. Uranus may also be linked to natural phenomena like earthquakes that cause massive disruption.

The fine line between genius and madness means that both come under the sway of Uranus. One person's genius is another person's unstable mind. Disorders of the nervous system may also be triggered by the action of Uranus.

Type: Non-traditional

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Aquarius
- *Detriment:* Leo
- *Exaltation:* N/A
- *Fall:* Taurus

Uranus represents a break with tradition, ingenuity, and revolutionary new ideas. Periods that are ruled by Uranus may see unexpected social developments. Uranus can give positive effects like insight, progressiveness, and creativity. It may also contribute to recklessness and rebellion. Eccentric individuals may feel a certain affinity with this planet.

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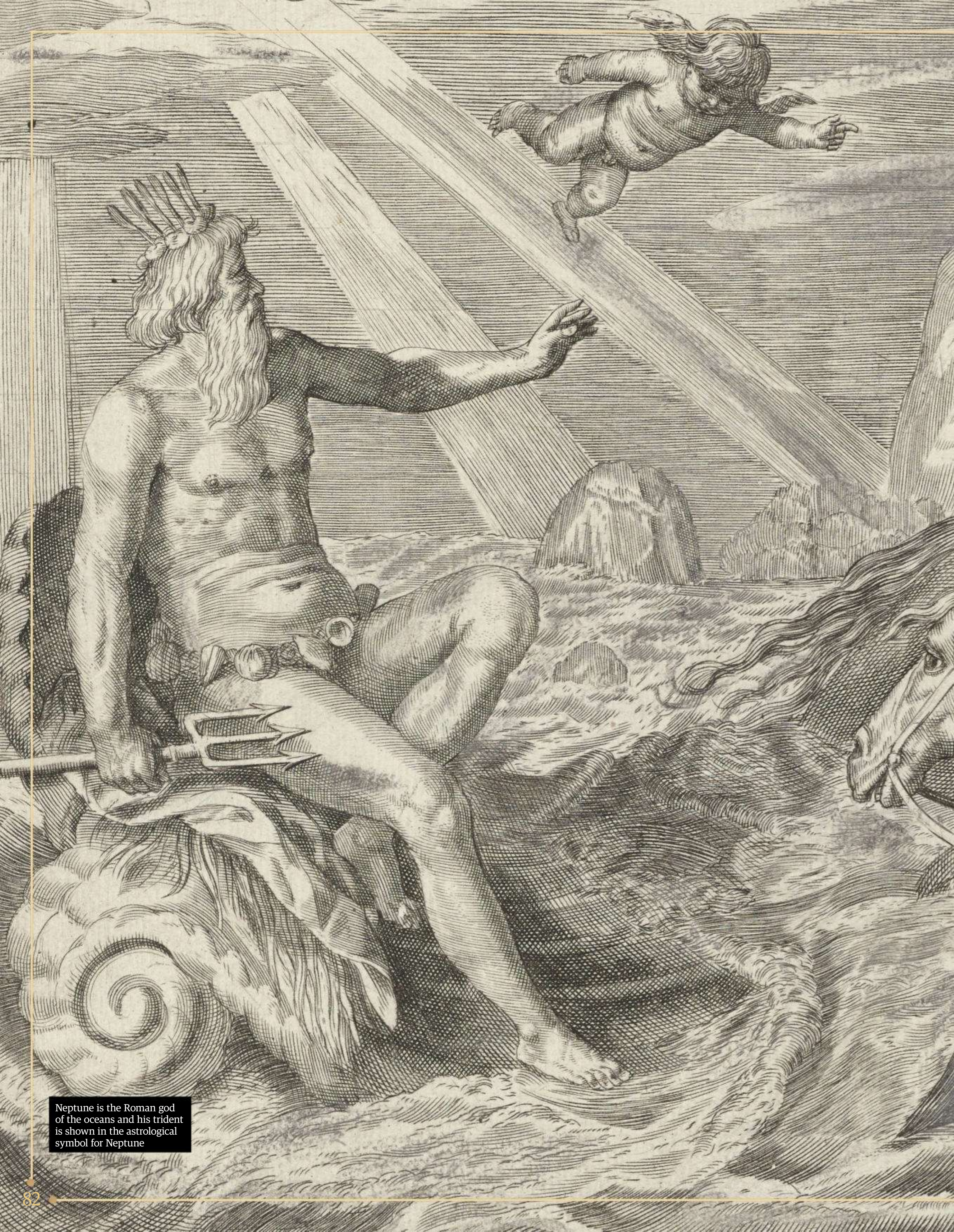

Neptune is the Roman god of the oceans and his trident is shown in the astrological symbol for Neptune

Neptune

Neptune casts a hazy net of subversion, which makes it a mysterious and fantastical force

Written by Ben Gazur

The deep blue colour of Neptune is appropriate for a planet named for the Roman god of the seas. Just as the waters of the ocean soon become dark and ghostly as you move into the depths so the meaning of Neptune is one caught in half-shadow.

Neptune represents the collective unconscious of humans. It orbits the Sun only once every 165 years so it only slowly travels between the signs of the zodiac. Its influence is felt more by society at large than it is by individuals. When tied to the motions of the personal planets, however, we can see how Neptune exerts a force on us. Neptune's connection to the psyche of humanity has given it mastery over dreams, magic, and spirituality. Yet it can also prompt deception and confusion.

The influence of Neptune is tied to things beyond the material world. Psychic powers that transcend normal matter are associated with this planet. This is closely related to its role in illusions and dreams – things that move beyond our normal senses. As befits the watery name of Neptune many of its influences are fluid and apt to change.

While we all need the occasional escape from mundane reality the negative aspects of Neptune may be expressed in delusions and the use of intoxicants to enter altered states. The most fruitful ways of channeling the energy of Neptune are through music and art where its inherent creativity can be put to use. Neptune's discovery coincided with the beginning of the Impressionist movement that saw art move away from literal interpretations and towards subject expressions of truth.

The uncertainty shared by many of Neptune's influences can be seen in medicine in undiagnosed illnesses or those that play on the mind.

Type: Non-traditional

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Pisces
- *Detriment:* Virgo
- *Exaltation:* N/A
- *Fall:* Capricorn

Neptune represents dreams, inspiration, and spirituality. Creative professions like acting, poetry, and art are all influenced by Uranus' power to harness fantasy and dreams. Neptune is the most spiritual of the planets and has been linked to psychic phenomena and extrasensory powers.

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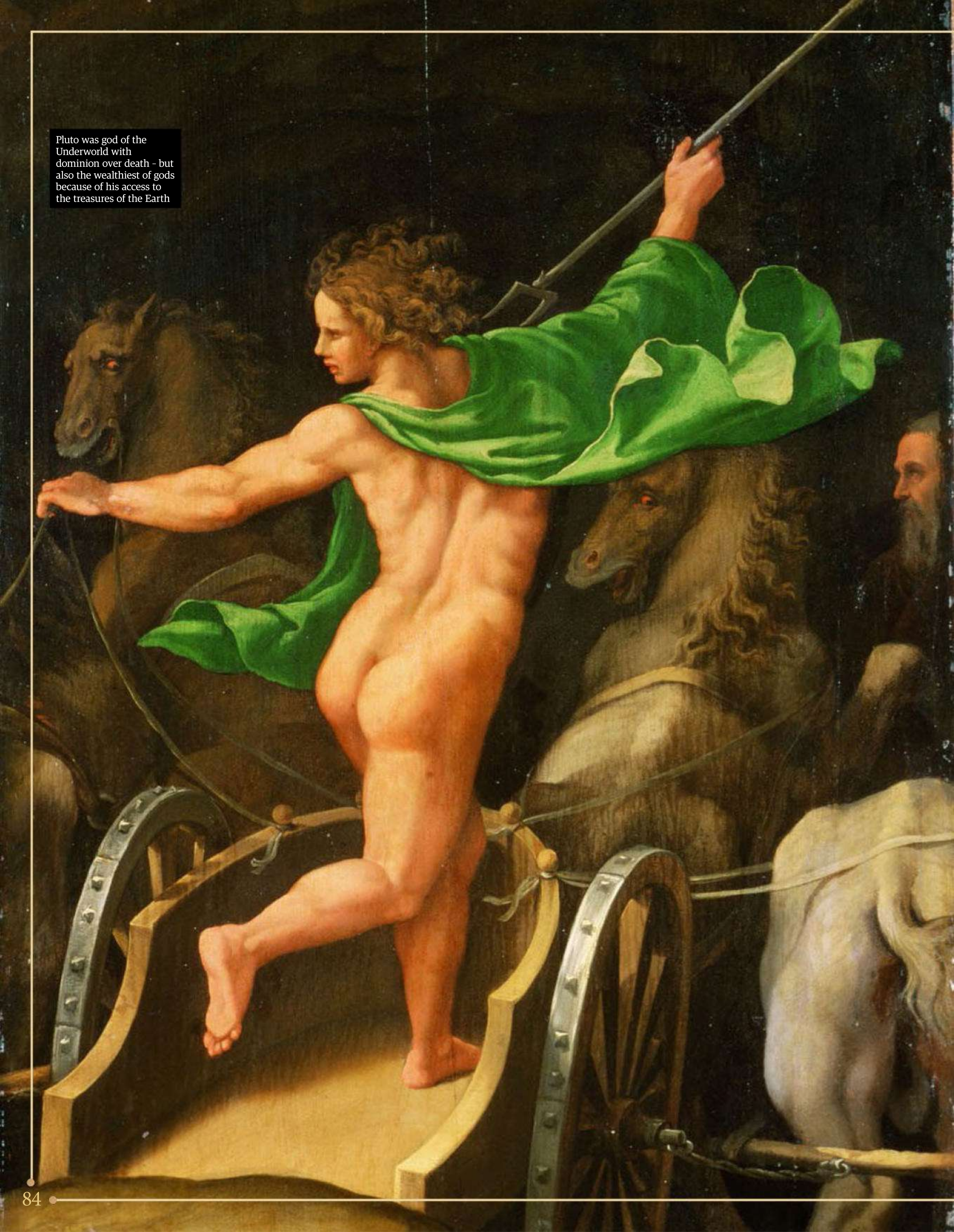

Pluto was god of the Underworld with dominion over death - but also the wealthiest of gods because of his access to the treasures of the Earth

Pluto

Pluto was the last planet to be discovered but its transformative powers make it one of the most important

Written by Ben Gazur

Pluto was only discovered by astronomers in 1930 yet by reading its motion backwards some astrologers have noted how it may have influenced the world. In 1914 Pluto's entry in Cancer coincided with the outbreak of the First World War. When the radioactive element Plutonium was later named for Pluto it seemed obvious that the planet would be a powerful and potentially destructive force.

The 20th century was full of upheavals. Revolutions swept away old governments, the rise of fascism caused horrors, and the scientific view of the universe changed radically. For these reasons the discovery of Pluto was incorporated in astrology as the planet most involved in change.

Pluto takes so long to orbit the Sun, 248 years, that it had not even completed one full circuit of the zodiac before scientists relegated it to the status of a dwarf planet. Spending a minimum of 15 years in each sign means that its influence is felt globally. It acts on the subconscious of humans in general more often than on any one individual.

Its effects may be subtle at first but if the energy of change it exerts is ignored or restricted then the results may be dramatic. The transformations that Pluto is connected to can be evolutionary or revolutionary. On the personal level the repression of change can create mental turmoil. Reinventing the self can be beneficial both spiritually and financially - Pluto was the god of wealth after all.

The reduction of Pluto's status has not reduced the interest of astrologers in its influence. Indeed it has led to an increased interest in the role other minor bodies of the Solar System may play in astrological charts.

Type: Non-traditional

Essential Dignities:

- *Domicile:* Scorpio
- *Detriment:* Taurus
- *Exaltation:* N/A
- *Fall:* Leo

Pluto is a planet that represents both the end of old things and the birth of the new. It's transformational influences are destructive and constructive at the same time. Pluto represents the subconscious of humanity and its movements determine mass upheavals and revolutions.

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Cancer
PISCES
ARIES
TAURUS
GEMINI
CANCER
LEO
VIRGO
LIBRA
CAPRICORN
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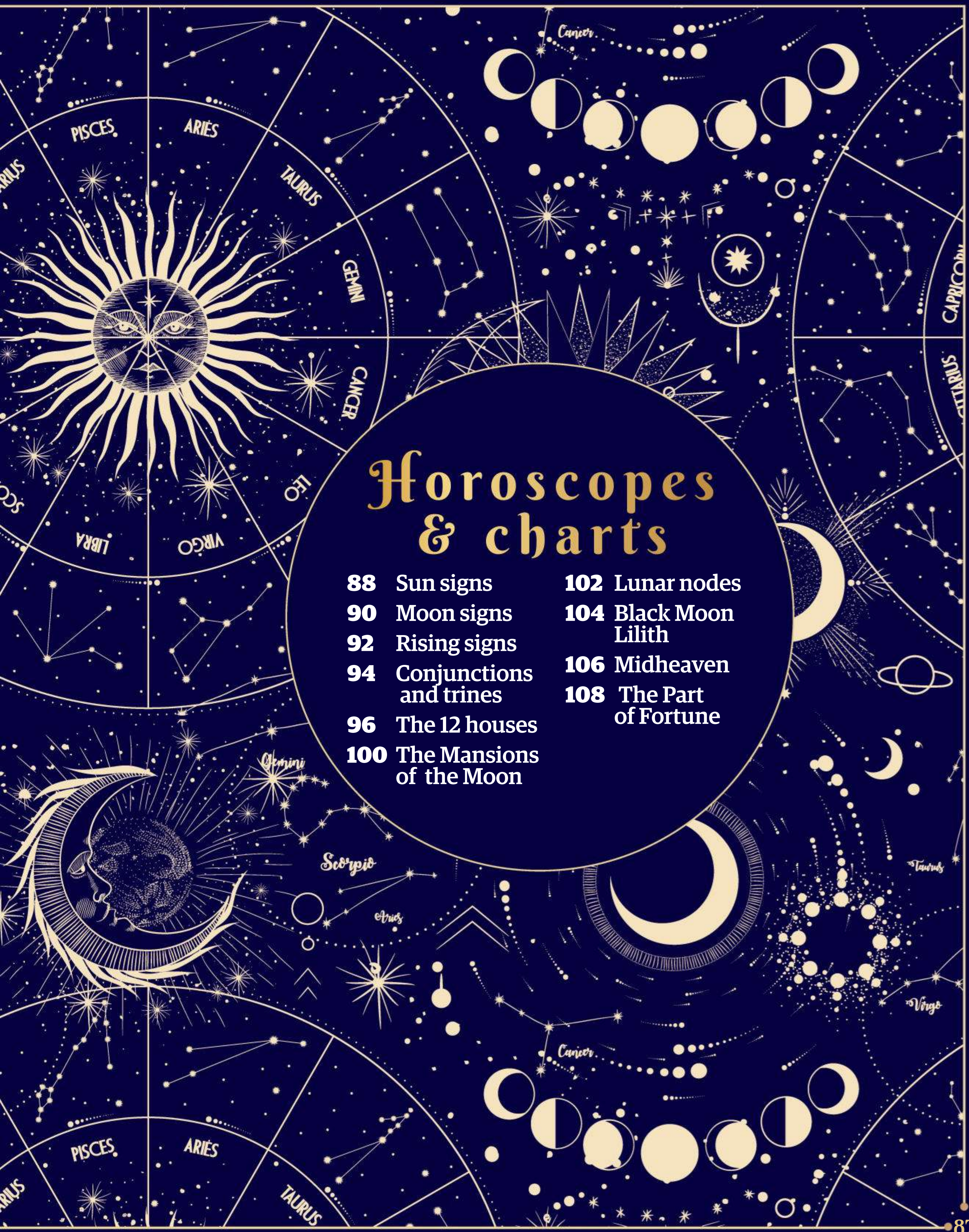
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Virgo
Cancer
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TAURUS

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The sun sign is the first and most important of the 'Big Three' signs that make up an individual's personality

Sun signs

According to astrology, the position of the Sun at our time of birth is of utmost importance in determining our personality. What does your sun sign say about you?

Written by Willow Winsham

Popularised in the US and UK by newspaper and magazine columns from the 1930s onwards, sun signs are the most well-known aspect of astrology in the Western world today. Even those who claim to care little for such things will likely know their sun sign when asked, and it is a rare individual indeed who is not familiar with the names of the 12 signs of the zodiac.

So what is a sun sign? Simply put, a person's sun sign is determined by which of the 12 signs of the zodiac the Sun was in at the time of birth. It is the easiest type of sign to calculate, because only the date of birth is needed, making sun sign astrology easily accessible.

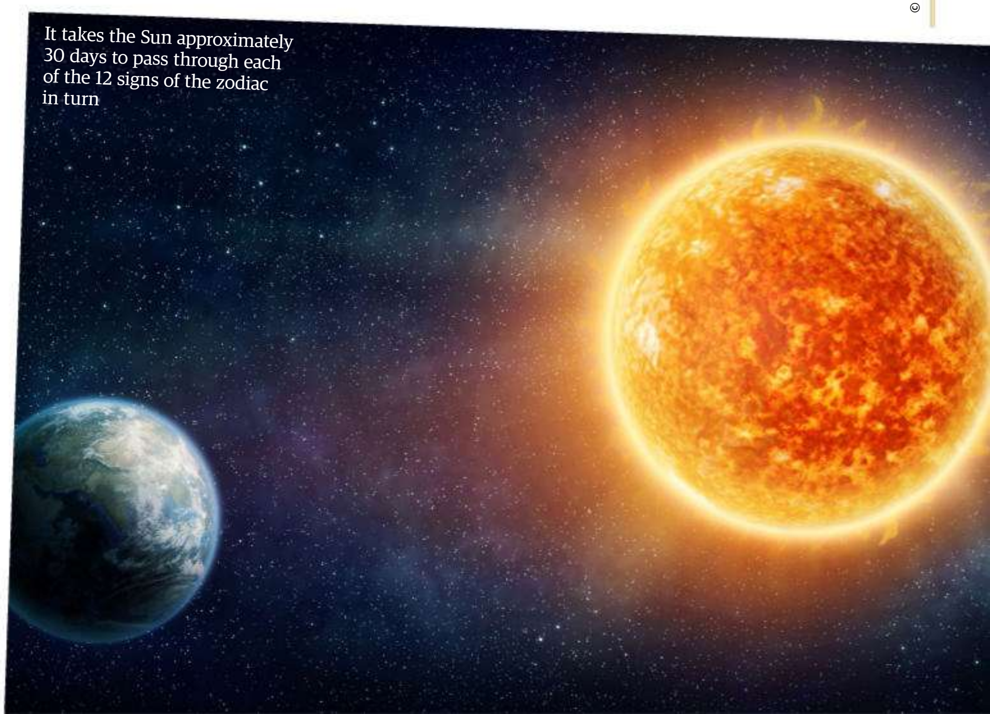
It is believed that the sun sign represents the very foundation of our personality, the essence of who we are, and it is therefore the most important sign in a person's birth chart. Each sign comes with its own corresponding quirks and characteristics, markers that make them stand out from the others. The signs are further divided into four elements: earth, fire, water and air, again, each with their own broad identifying traits.

Although the invention of sun sign columns themselves was relatively recent, the concept of sun signs has a much older pedigree. The Babylonian empire had 12 constellations, and the Greek astrologers changed a few to give us the zodiac names we recognise today.

Today, sun sign books are the most popular astrology books available. Indeed, sun sign astrology has expanded beyond just our own personal destinies; if inclined, it is now possible to explore the star signs of your dogs, cats and favourite celebrities. Surprisingly, sun signs weren't always so popular; historically, planet-based rather than sign-based astrology was dominant when it came to calculating and interpreting an individual's birth chart.

Star sign astrology is not an exact science; it is believed that if someone is born on the 'cusp' of two signs (that is, close to where two signs meet), then they might have traits from both.

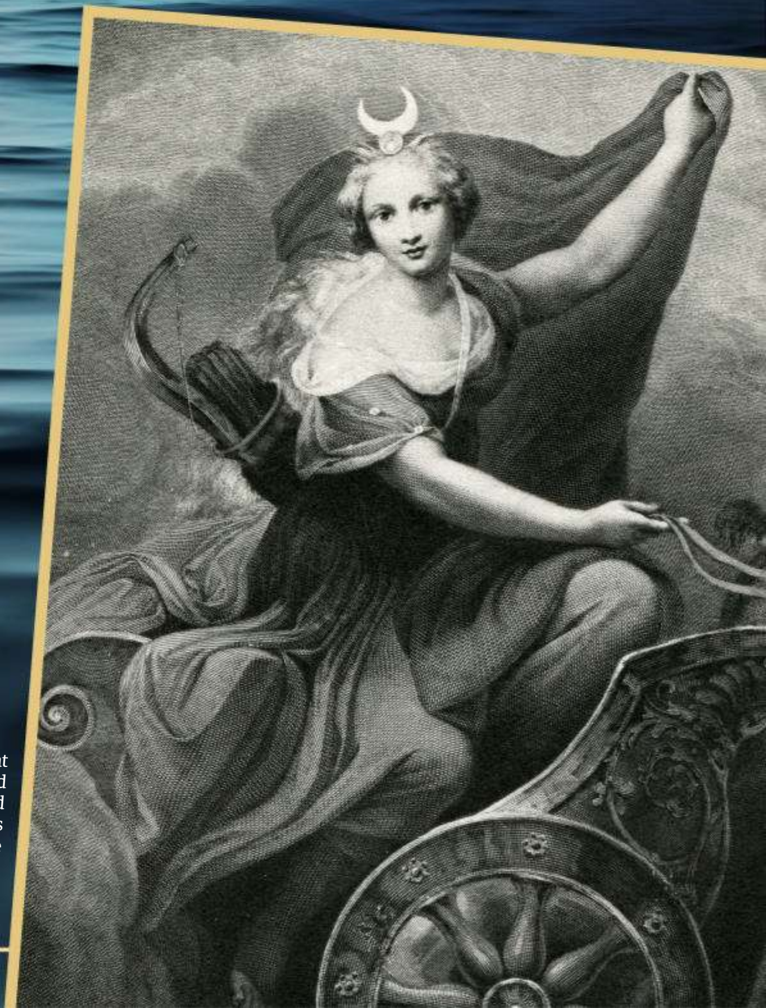
Sun sign columns have long caused controversy among astrologers. Considered by some to be valid and instructive, others are less enamoured of the lure of such columns, believing them to be little better than fraudulent sensationalism. In 1967, when 213 German astrologers were surveyed, 49 per cent supported banning sun sign columns!



It takes the Sun approximately 30 days to pass through each of the 12 signs of the zodiac in turn

© Getty Images

400 times smaller than the Sun, the Moon and its solar counterpart have been partnered together countless times throughout history



The great importance placed on the Moon and its influence is reflected in the number of deities associated with it throughout history

Moon signs

Everyone has heard of sun signs, but what of the Moon's influence over a person's personality and life?

Written by Willow Winsham

Shining by dint of the Sun's light, the Moon has been the celestial counterpart to the Sun throughout history. Greatly revered by many civilisations and cultures, the Moon has been linked to more deities than any other body in the sky. It will come as no surprise therefore to learn that the Moon's influence is deemed to be of great importance where astrology is concerned.

Unlike the Sun, the Moon passes through each sign of the zodiac in two and a half days, taking around 28 days to move through all 12 signs in turn. The sign that the Moon is in at the time of a person's birth – their moon sign – is said to reflect the individual's subconscious and the unconscious, everything that is buried deep down inside. Like our emotions, the Moon is in a constant state of change and flux, waxing and waning, changing in size. Our instincts and reactions to life's events therefore are also said to be influenced by our moon sign, along with our emotional wellbeing, our gut reactions and deepest emotions. After the sun sign, the moon sign is considered to be the next most important influence on a person's personality, and it is even thought that, in some cases, the moon sign can override that of the Sun. The moon sign reflects the whole gamut of emotions known to humankind and how an individual deals with them. Knowledge of our moon sign can also be beneficial in identifying the best way for an individual to approach self care.

Different sun signs are said to be affected by the Moon in different ways, and reading the two together can offer a fuller picture of a person's personality. Conflict between a person's sun sign and moon sign could be an explanation for apparent discord between their desires and needs throughout life, whereas if the sun and moon sign are the same, an enviable inner harmony can be expected.

The lure of learning more about our deepest emotions is a strong one, and there are a range of books promising to help an individual unlock their inner life or harness the hidden power of the emotions through looking at the moon sign. The position of the Moon at birth is believed to be linked to a person's relationship with their mother, illustrating again the ever-present association and affinity between the Moon and women.

© Getty Images

Rising signs

The sign on the eastern horizon at the time of a person's birth has a big influence on their personality. But just why is the ascendant sign so important?

Written by Willow Winsham

The last of the 'Big Three', a person's ascendant or rising sign completes the major birth chart influences on their personality. The sign present on the eastern horizon at the time of an individual's birth, calculating the ascendant is a complex process, involving the time and place of birth as well as the date. The lengthy task of creating a chart is overcome today, however, with many free websites offering basic charts that include the rising sign.

Simply put, the ascendant sign is the clothing of a person's soul and inner personality, the front that they present to the world. It is the first piece of you that someone else encounters, that vital first impression you make to those you meet. Likewise, the vibe or sense of a person you feel when meeting someone new is very likely to be a reflection of their ascendant sign, so pay close attention!

The ascendant is particularly linked to a person's childhood environment and experiences, and in

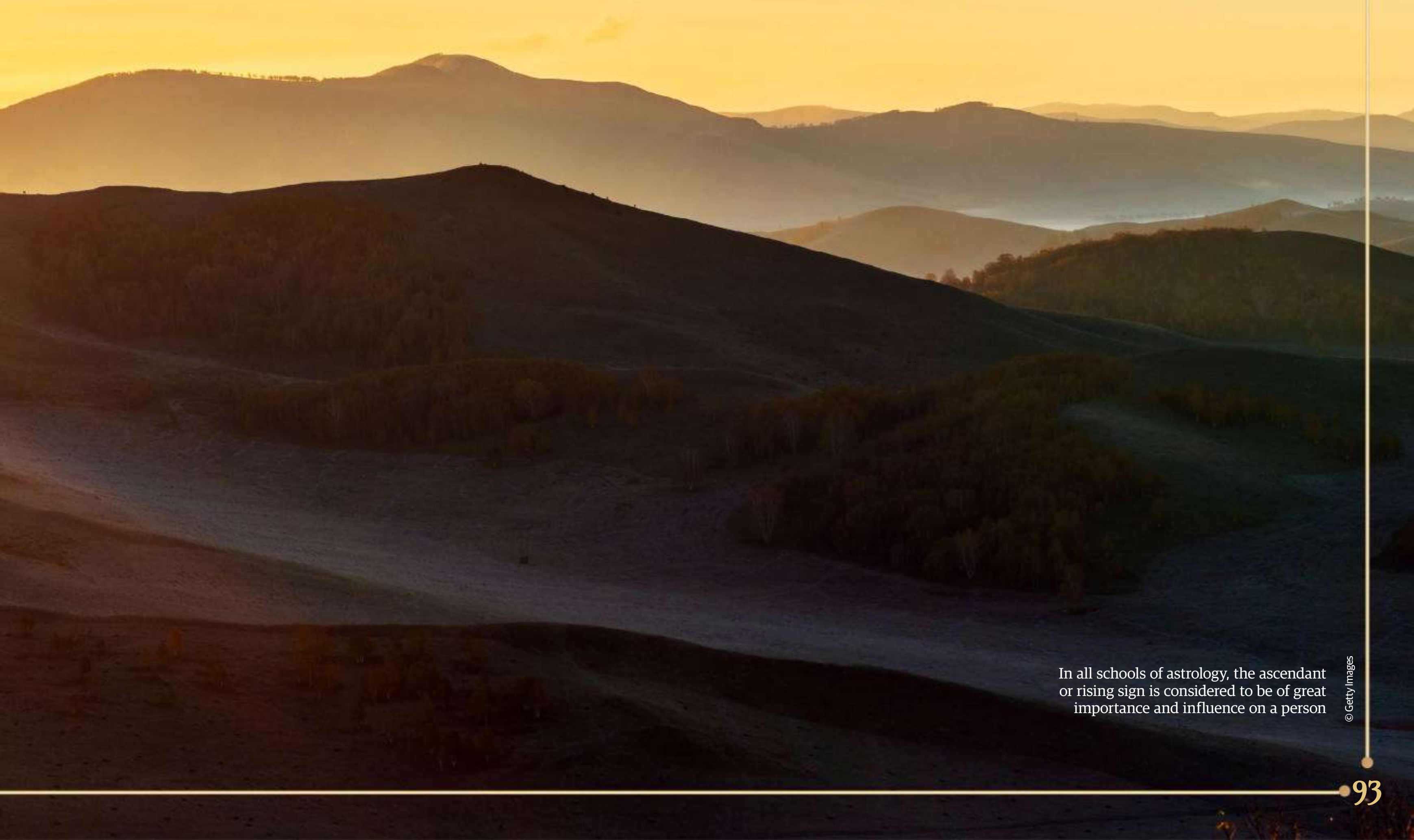
turn how these have moulded how an individual presents themselves to others later in life. The ascendant is also closely connected to a person's health and physical appearance, and can hint at what they might expect to experience in those areas during their lifetime.

Although less popular today, throughout history, the rising sign was actually considered to be the most important aspect of a person's chart, even more so than the sun sign itself. There has been a glyph thought to represent the ascendant since ancient Greek times, reflecting the importance of the ascendant to astrology.

Identifying an individual's ascendant sign allows for a deeper analysis of their chart, as it is believed to account for the subtlety of differences between people of the same sun sign. Individuals born on the same day but a few hours apart can have significantly different personalities, on account of having different rising signs. Due to this, it is possible for twins to have different rising signs and therefore different influences on their personalities.

The overall influence of the ascendant on an individual is dependent on certain factors. If the Sun holds a weak position in a birth chart, the rising sign will play a stronger role in forming the character of that individual. Likewise, if the ascendant is towards the beginning rather than the end of the sign, it will also hold a greater influence.

Calculating the ascendant by looking at the sign present on the eastern horizon at the time of an individual's birth, is a complex process



In all schools of astrology, the ascendant or rising sign is considered to be of great importance and influence on a person

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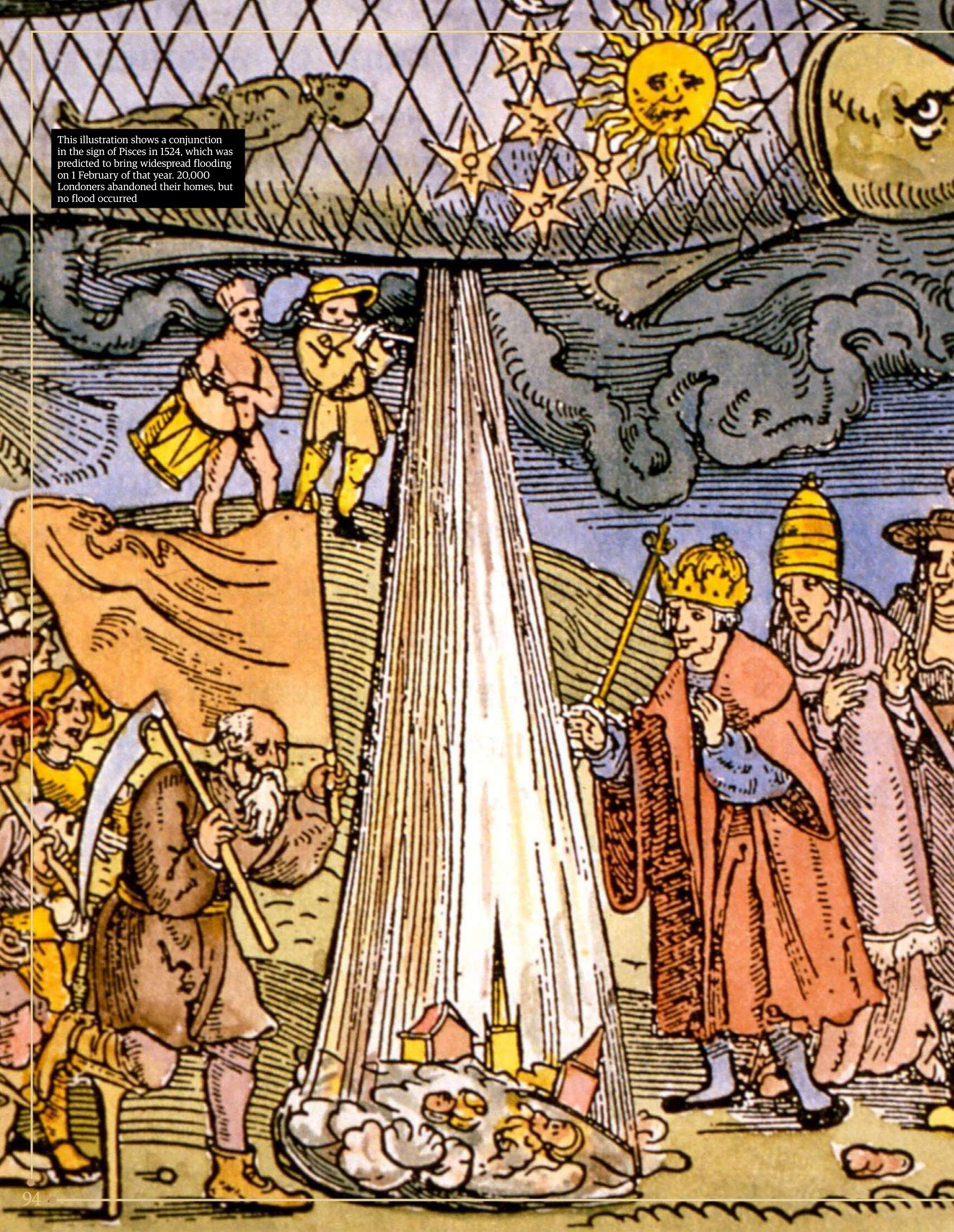

This illustration shows a conjunction in the sign of Pisces in 1524, which was predicted to bring widespread flooding on 1 February of that year. 20,000 Londoners abandoned their homes, but no flood occurred

Conjunctions and trines

Conjunctions and trines consider the aspect between two bodies, and it is this aspect that determines the relationship between them

Written by Joanna Elphick

Planets in a conjunction are sitting next to one another with a zero degree of separation in the same sign or at an orb of not more than eight degrees. This is often referred to as a 'neutral aspect'. In other words, neither particularly compatible nor incompatible, they just seem to cope with one another's presence. The effect of the conjunction, negative or positive, really depends upon the sign where the conjunction is actually taking place, and also whether one of the planets is more dominant in that sign than in the other. However, one thing is certain: a conjunction is considered to be the most powerful aspect in a person's chart, as it tends to magnify the effects and characteristics of the planets involved. So, if the characteristics of the two planets involved work well together, then this compatibility is intensified, instigating a particularly energised reaction. Unfortunately, the melding of two negative planets will bring about a destructive and highly challenging reaction.

A trine occurs where two planets are separated by an angle of 120 degrees or at an orb of approximately seven degrees, and is commonly considered to be the most auspicious aspect of them all. This usually takes place between planets in signs that share the same element of either earth, water, air or fire, and therefore create a sensation of synchronicity and harmony. Astrologers believe that such an aspect allows energy to flow more freely and creates an air of good luck. It can also indicate an innate talent or skill that will develop over time. However, while a trine is generally a positive aspect, it can denote a certain sense of entitlement, which could in turn lead to laziness, since life may appear too easy. Such unrelenting good fortune often results in a lack of drive, quashing any desire to reach for further goals, which may stunt an individual's true potential. This is particularly true when a grand trine occurs. This is where three planets appear on a chart, all at the same distance from each other, creating an equilateral triangle. Such a placement of planets may indicate a charmed life, but it also leaves little incentive to develop self-discipline.

Aspects are vital when it comes to interpreting a chart, as they can alter the meaning and influence of a planetary placement. This is never truer than when dealing with a major aspect such as a conjunction or trine.

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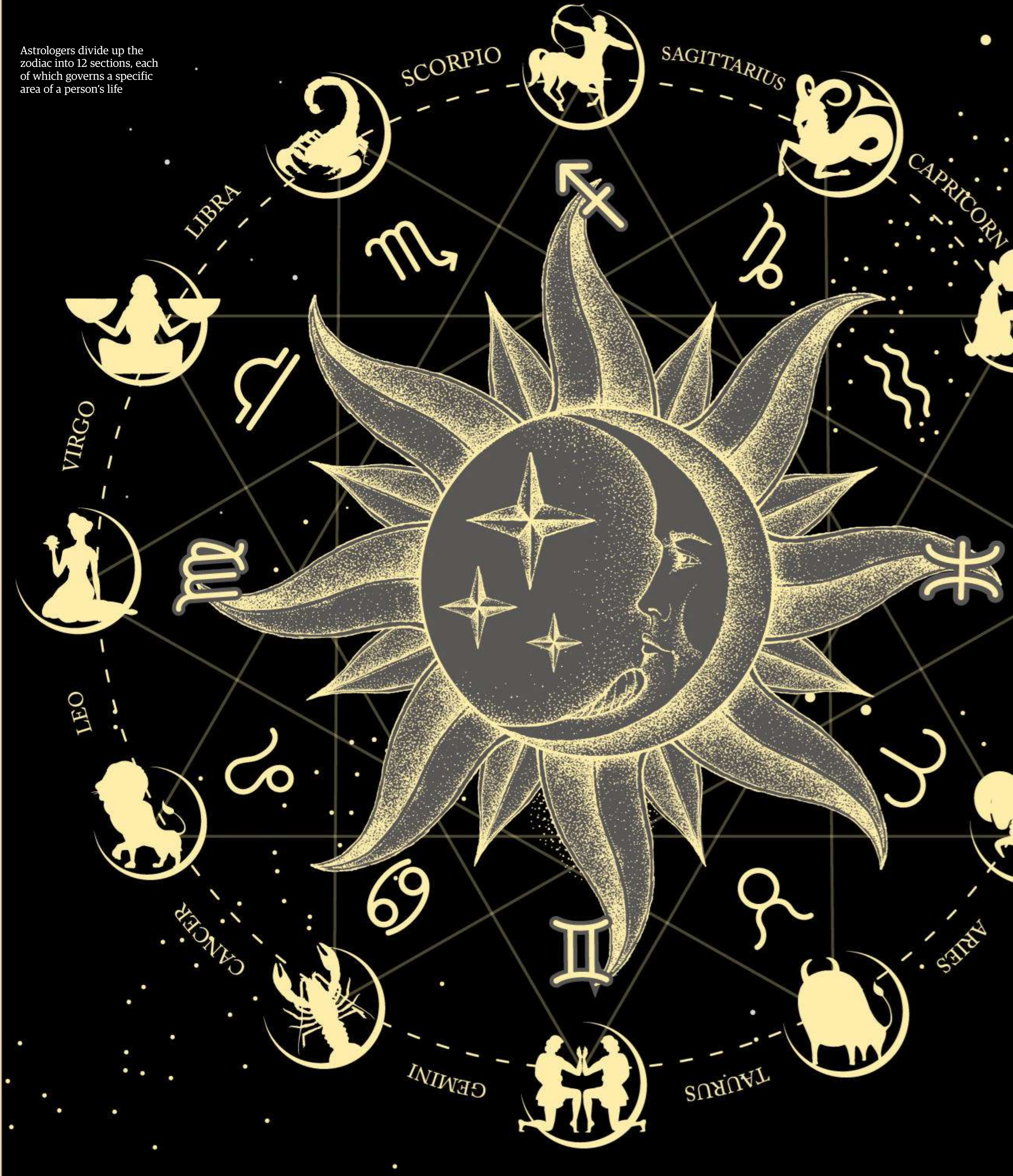
Astrologers divide up the zodiac into 12 sections, each of which governs a specific area of a person's life


SCORPIO
SAGITTARIUS
CAPRICORN
LIBRA
VIRGO
LEO
CANCER
GEMINI
TAURUS
ARIES

The twelve houses

To astrologers, the 12 houses are one of the most vital pieces of their cosmic toolkit, and they have complex uses

Written by Catherine Curzon

AQUARIUS
PISCES

The zodiac is divided into 12 sections, just like the hours on a clock, and these are known as houses, each one ruled by a different sign. Unlike a clockface, though, in the wheel of the zodiac, the houses are read anti-clockwise. Each of these houses, like the sign that governs it, is associated with a unique set of traits.

These begin with the fundamentals of the self, and gradually move further out from the self, taking in all aspects of life, from love to money, career to society, before returning to the self for the final, 12th house. The first six houses of the 12 are known to astrologers as the personal houses; the remaining six are the interpersonal houses. Taken as a whole, the houses create a complete picture of each individual and can be considered a map of the road they will walk through life.

Each person's astrological chart, and the relationship to the 12 houses, is decided at the exact moment of the person's birth. Unlike some other astrological readings, the chart relies on more detail than the simple date of birth, as the exact time is also vital to assure a full picture. At the precise time of our birth, the planets are each residing in specific houses, under specific signs. When an astrologer creates and interprets a client's birth chart, they will look at a number of crucial elements, and the houses of the zodiac are a vital part of this.

Central to the interpretation is the meaning of each individual planet, the house in which it is residing at the time of birth, and the sign that governs it, too. Perhaps it is easiest to envision the 12 houses as a diagram written on the heavens, with the planets constantly moving between each house. When a planet arrives in a house, it illuminates that section of the chart and empowers and energises the traits that the house holds. When properly interpreted, the location of the planets in a house can provide clients with an understanding of the ups and downs that life might hold for them in the years to come.

The locations of each planet at the moment you are born can have an impact on your entire life. Astrologers start with what is known as the rising sign, the sign of the zodiac that is on the horizon at the moment of your birth. Also known as the ascendant, this is the planet of your first house. Astrologers then work anti-clockwise through each of the remaining 11, examining and interpreting each planet and its location in turn.

It's perfectly normal to have no planets in some houses, and more than one in others, but essentially the planet lends further understanding to the meaning of the house. For example, if Jupiter, a planet associated with good luck, is in your fourth house, which rules home and family, when you're born, then you'll enjoy a happy homelife, and one that always seems to enjoy the very best fortune.

The first house is ruled by Aries. This house, which is known as your rising or ascendent sign, governs all the firsts you might see in your life, from new beginnings to fresh starts, or even new projects and each individual's style of leadership. It also rules your fundamental approach to life and how others see you in turn.

F. Parmi fecit

For centuries, astrologers have watched the stars. Yet in the East and West, parallel methods and traditions have emerged

The second house is ruled by Taurus. It relates to the day-to-day manner in which you live your life, from your daily habits and routines to your attitude to work and your work ethic. It's a very solid and physical house, governing your physical environment and the possessions in it, and it also governs your finances – so everyone would be happy to see a fortunate planet shining brightly in this house.

After the physical properties of the second house, the third rules the mind and communication. Yet in the modern era, a house that was understood initially to be about talking has now expanded to include our relationship with technology, and its impact on the way we communicate. Ruled by Gemini, it also covers our relationship with our siblings and friends, and our social lives and interests.

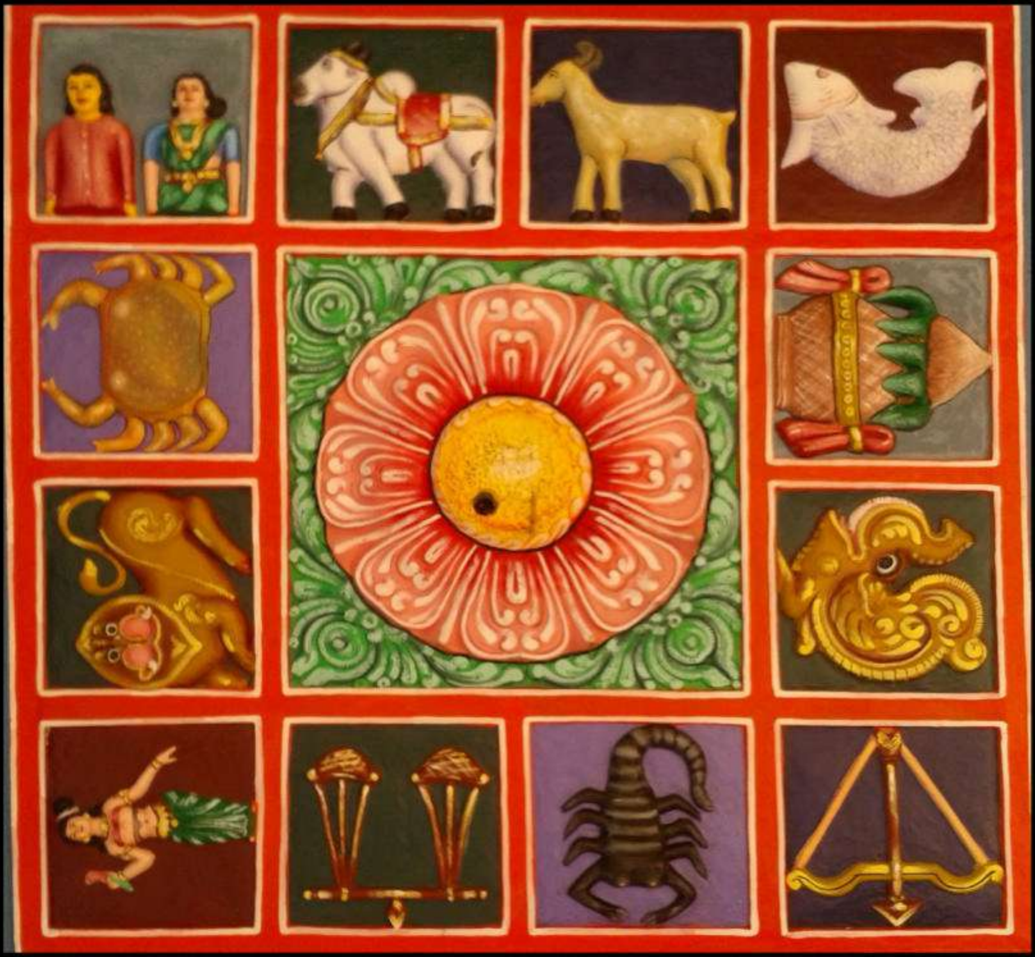
Right at the bottom-most point of the wheel of the zodiac we find the fourth house, which is ruled by Cancer. Given its position in the wheel, it won't come as any surprise to learn that the fourth house is the foundation of all that we are. Like the roots of a plant, it is the roots of the self, and informs your home and family, as well as your own maternal instincts. This is a house that is associated with the feminine, and it can be used to further understand each individual's relationship with their mother, and even their own sense of nurturing.

From the rooted foundations of the fourth house, we move into the Leo-ruled fifth house. This leaves behind the emotional, sometimes inwards-looking elements of the fourth house and bursts out in self-expression. The fifth house is all about our inner child, and our sense of playfulness and creativity. It's associated with drama and romance, and it has a healthy dose of fun to go with them.

The sixth house focuses on health and fitness, and it is ruled by Virgo. Though it governs diet, exercise and overall fitness, it also governs our service to others, and how much we concentrate on helping not just ourselves, but those around us and in the wider community too.

Ruled by Libra, the seventh house finds the zodiac in a business-like sort of a mood, even in matters of romance. This house is the sector that relates to our relationships with other people. It governs all sorts of relationships and partnerships, from romantic to business, and also how we relate

Jupiter, a planet associated with good fortune, would be welcome in any house of the zodiac, guaranteeing a happy outcome



to others. Contracts in business, marriage and everything in between can all be found in this house of the zodiac.

For the sector that governs the most intimate area of our lives, we look to the eighth house and its ruling sign, Scorpio. This house governs the most mysterious elements of the human condition, such as intimacy, sex, birth and death. If the seventh house governs contracts and partnerships, the eighth changes tack by delving into more intimate bonds, where energies merge and intimate bonds are created. Yet there is a very material side to this house, too, as it also rules such serious matters as taxation, loans, investments and issues related to the finances and property of other people.

As the zodiac chart continues, we reach the ninth house, which is situated towards its top. Fittingly, given our journey around the wheel to reach it, it governs travel to far-flung places as well as a less physical sort of travel, with the expansion of knowledge, the learning of languages and achievements in philosophical and educational matters. It is ruled by Sagittarius and governs our sense of adventure, not to mention whether we are happy to take risks in return for the right rewards.

At the very top of the chart is the tenth house, ruled by Capricorn. This house is the most public, so it is only fitting that it governs our long-term goals and our public image. The tenth house is the house of fame and reward, not to mention achievement. Sitting as it does directly opposite the fourth house, it is the house of paternalism, just as the fourth is that of the maternal. The cusp of the tenth house, known by astrologers as Midheaven, offers insight into a person's career path, too.

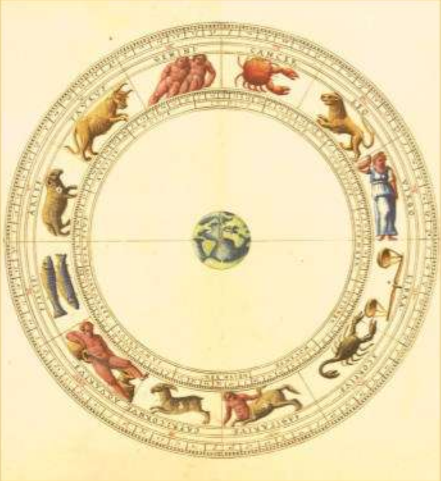
The 11th and penultimate house, which is ruled by Aquarius, is the house of social interaction. It governs our interaction with friends and society as a whole, as well as our sense of social awareness. This house is the house from which eccentricity and originality shines, illuminating our brightest hopes for what the future might hold.

The final house of the zodiac, and the house that completes the wheel, is the 12th house. This final segment of the dozen, quite fittingly, rules endings of all sorts. It is ruled by Pisces and governs closure, whether that be the tying up of loose ends, the completion of tasks and projects, or even old age. In the 12th house we can gain insight into all that is hidden, and that which may be most difficult to see with the conscious mind.

The house systems

There are numerous house systems, and astrologers each have their own preferred favourite. It might be said that the stars will guide us to the right decision! The Placidus system flourished during the Renaissance, but its potentially ancient origins are still unknown. It is the most widely used system today, and was popularised thanks to the writings of Placidus, who viewed life as something that unfolds in stages, rather like the turning of pages in a book. In the Placidus system, each of these stages is marked by a mathematically determined new point on the wheel of the zodiac, and changes as we move into the next house.

Contrary to this, followers of the Sidereal system believe that the houses of the zodiac do not unfold in sequence, but overlap. This is a system favoured by Indian astrology and it shares its sequence of 12 houses with the Tropical system, which starts at the spring equinox. The Tropical zodiac is favoured in the West, and both systems divide their houses into 12 sections, each of 30 degrees. However, Sidereal astrology attempts to keep the alignment between signs and constellations, relative to the movement of fixed stars from the perspective of those on earth. The Tropical system, however, always starts with the equinox.



Armed with the exact time and date of a person's birth, astrologers are able to give valuable insight into their lives

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The Mansions of the Moon

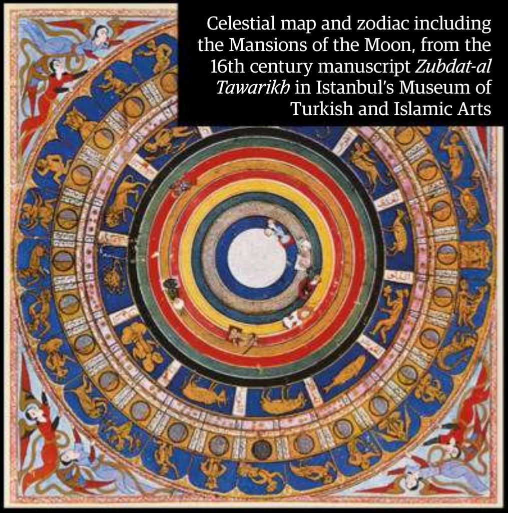
As the Moon orbits the Earth, it takes up different stations in the zodiac, which are believed to have certain influences

Written by April Madden

The poetically named Mansions of the Moon come from early Medieval Arabic astrology. This has roots in both classical (Western) astrology and Vedic (Indian) astrology. In late antiquity, Arab civilisations conquered territories that had been both Persian and Greek – cultural melting pots like the Hellenic Greek city of Alexandria – and assimilated their knowledge, which had been collected from all over the then known world. The early Medieval Arabs were also highly adept mathematical theorists and this, combined with their own technological advances and the knowledge they'd acquired from other civilisations, made them the most astronomically adept civilisation the world had seen at the time. Many of their discoveries still underpin modern astronomy and astrology to this day.

The 28 Mansions of the Moon, or lunar stations, are areas of the sky that the Moon passes through during its journey around the Earth every month. Arabic astrology has always been very concerned with predicting events, and the Mansions of the Moon are believed to provide a guide to good and bad days on which to travel, interact with friends and loved ones, plant seeds, engage in business, and a whole host of other activities, especially when considered as part of the wider picture of the heavens. Arabic folklore is full of tales of astrologically wise men and women who, having observed the stars, the season and the Mansion that the Moon is (or will be) in, decline to take an ill-fated journey on which their would-be companions end up perishing, or who see their inevitable death written in the skies and calmly sit down in their majlis to await it.

In Arabic alchemy of the Medieval period, talismans were made during the different Mansions of the Moon. These combined particular symbols, materials and spells with the corresponding lunar energy and were believed to provide fortune in love, business and money matters, 'favour from kings', and even protection over orchards and fields. They were made when the Moon was in the relevant Mansion and worn, or placed in an appropriate location, thereafter. Today, apps like iLuna can tell you what sign the Moon is in and when it is void-of-course, and also what Mansion it's currently in, and its meaning.



Celestial map and zodiac including the Mansions of the Moon, from the 16th century manuscript *Zubdat-al Tawarikh* in Istanbul's Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts

The 28 Mansions

1. AL-SHARATAIN
0° Aries - 12° 51′ 26″ Aries
Essence: Change, movement, beginnings, energy, force.
Good for: Beginnings, business activities, gardening, travelling, hair and nails.
Not good for: Friendships, love, hiring new people.

2. AL-BUTAIN
12° 51′ 26″ Aries - 25° 42′ 51″ Aries
Essence: Conflict, effort, will, courage, energy.
Good for: Treasure, trade, sowing seeds, hunting, fire, favour from authority figures.
Not good for: Travelling by water, planting trees, friendship and love, passivity, new people.

3. AL- THURAYYA
25° 42′ 51″ Aries - 8° 34′ 17″ Taurus
Essence: Prosperity, abundance, success, work, determination.
Good for: Work, study, business, alchemy, fire, love, art and creativity.
Not good for: Gardening, travelling by water, friendship, marriage. new people.

4. AL-DABARAN
8° 34′ 17″ Taurus - 21° 25′ 43″ Taurus
Essence: Violent passion, enmity, conflict, struggle, anger.
Good for: Overcoming enemies and obstacles, craftsmanship, trade, work.
Not good for: Travelling by sea, mining, wells, building and home buying, friendship, marriage.

5. AL-HAQA
21° 25′ 43″ Taurus - 4° 17′ 09″ Gemini
Essence: Benefic, intellect and mind.
Good for: Studying, art, returning from journeys, travelling (especially via water), favours from superiors, hair.
Not good for: Socialising, teamwork, people.

6. AL-HANA
4° 17′ 09″ Gemini - 17° 8′ 34″ Gemini
Essence: Attraction, opposition.
Good for: Relationships, love, friendship, business, alliances.
Not good for: Healing, gardening.

7. AL-DHIRA
17° 8′ 34″ Gemini - 0° Cancer
Essence: Abundance, success, trust.
Good for: Trade, business, the favour of superiors, friendship, love, hair, healing.
Not good for: Justice, the law.

8. AL-NATHRAH
0° Cancer - 12° 51′ 26″ Cancer
Essence: Love, power, victory.
Good for: Love, marriage, friendship, family, goals, healing, travelling by land.
Not good for: Hiring people.

9. AL-TARF
12° 51′ 26″ Cancer - 25° 42′ 51″ Cancer
Essence: Discord, disappointment, defence.
Good for: Defending yourself from attack.
Not good for: Love, friendship, health, gardening, travel.

10. AL-JABHAH
25° 42′ 51″ Cancer - 8° 34′ 17″ Leo
Essence: Benevolence, recovery, aid against enemies.
Good for: Friendship, socialising, love, studying, health, building, spirituality.
Not good for: Travel, misusing medications.

11. AL-ZUBRAH
8° 34′ 17″ Leo - 21° 25′ 43″ Leo
Essence: Gains, power, respect.
Good for: Profit, travel, promotions and requests to authority, hair, building, marriage, courageous deeds.
Not good for: Women's health.

12. AL-SARFAH
21° 25′ 43″ Leo - 4° 17′ 09″ Virgo
Essence: Conflict, confrontation, obstacles, good harvests.
Good for: Farming, gardening, building, working for others, service, sending messages.
Not good for: Relationships, marriage, journeys by sea.

13. AL FARGH AL-AWWA
21° 25′ 43″ Aquarius - 4° 17′ 09″ Pisces
Essence: Union, love, affection.
Good for: Health, healing, love, marriage, gardening, farming, travelling by land, commerce.
Not good for: Building, journeys by sea.

14. AL-SIMAK
17° 08′ 34″ Virgo - 0° Libra
Essence: Movement, improvement, transition.
Good for: Romance, love, friendship, moving house, leaving jobs or relationships, travelling by sea, gardening, healing.
Not good for: Travelling by land, marriage.

15. AL-GHAFR
0° Libra - 12° 51′ 26″ Libra
Essence: Prosperity, focus on the material, discord.
Good for: Wealth, money, business, treasure seeking.
Not good for: Love and romance, family, travelling.

16. AL-ZUBANA
12° 51′ 26″ Libra - 25° 42′ 51″ Libra
Essence: Prosperity, wealth, but no love.
Good for: Prosperity, trade, wealth, business.
Not good for: Gardening, travelling, healing, love, relationships.

17. AL-IKLIL
25° 42′ 51″ Libra - 8° 34′ 17″ Scorpio
Essence: Prevented loss, friendship.
Good for: Friendship, love, marriage, financial security, promotion, building, hair, healing.
Not good for: Travelling, taking commercial risks.

18. AL-QALB
8° 34′ 17″ Scorpio - 21° 25′ 43″ Scorpio
Essence: Impending danger, defence.
Good for: Farming, building, exposing enemies, treating stomach ailments.
Not good for: Almost everything, family matters, eating too much, unknown foods.

19. AL-SHAULAH
21° 25′ 43″ Scorpio - 4° 17′ 09″ Sagittarius
Essence: Besiegement and battle, sadness, loss.
Good for: Gardening, farming, aggression, hunting.
Not good for: Commerce, business, friendship, family matters, travelling by sea.

20. AL-NA'AM
4° 17′ 09″ Sagittarius - 17° 8′ 34″ Sagittarius
Essence: Concentrated controlled energy, passions.
Good for: Teamwork, animals, hunting, building, travelling by land.
Not good for: Financial matters, marriage.

21. AL-BALDAH
17° 8′ 34″ Sagittarius - 0° Capricorn
Essence: Enmity, argument, conflict.
Good for: Healing, travelling, earnings, gardening, farming.
Not good for: Personal relationships, marriage, hiring people.

22. SA'D AL DHABIH
12° 51′ 26″ Capricorn - 25° 42′ 51″ Capricorn
Essence: Separation, freedom, conflict, healing.
Good for: Divorce, healing, obtaining freedom.
Not good for: Personal relationships, marriage.

23. SA'D BULA
Placement: *12° 51′ 26″ Cancer - 25° 42′ 51″ Cancer*
Essence: Discord, disappointment, defence.
Good for: Defending yourself.
Not good for: Love, friendship, health, gardening, travel.

24. SA'D AL-SU'UD
25° 42′ 51″ Capricorn - 8° 34′ 17″ Aquarius
Essence: Nurture, nutrition, fulfillment.
Good for: New projects, love, marriage, income, commerce, finance, building.
Not good for: Travelling by water, people in power.

25. SA'D AL-AKHBIYAH
8° 34′ 17″ Aquarius - 21° 25′ 43″ Aquarius
Essence: Growth, protection, revenge.
Good for: Gardening, farming, protecting plants, studying, intellect.
Not good for: Marriage, friendship, conception, pregnancy.

26. AL FARGH AL-THANI
4° 17′ 09″ Pisces - 17° 8′ 34″ Pisces
Essence: Connection, income, mischief.
Good for: Healing, gardening, farming, business and commerce.
Not good for: New projects, building, travel by sea.

27. AL FARGH AL-THANI
4° 17′ 09″ Virgo - 17° 08′ 34″ Virgo
Essence: Achieving desires, benevolence, increase.
Good for: Love, sex, money, beginning creative projects, hair, healing, gardening, building, travelling.
Not good for: Overeating.

28. BATN AL-HUT
17° 8′ 34″ Pisces - 0° Aries
Essence: Fruition, guidance, completion.
Good for: Marriage, gardening, farming, business, commerce, travelling.
Not good for: Health, invalids, freedom, borrowing and lending.

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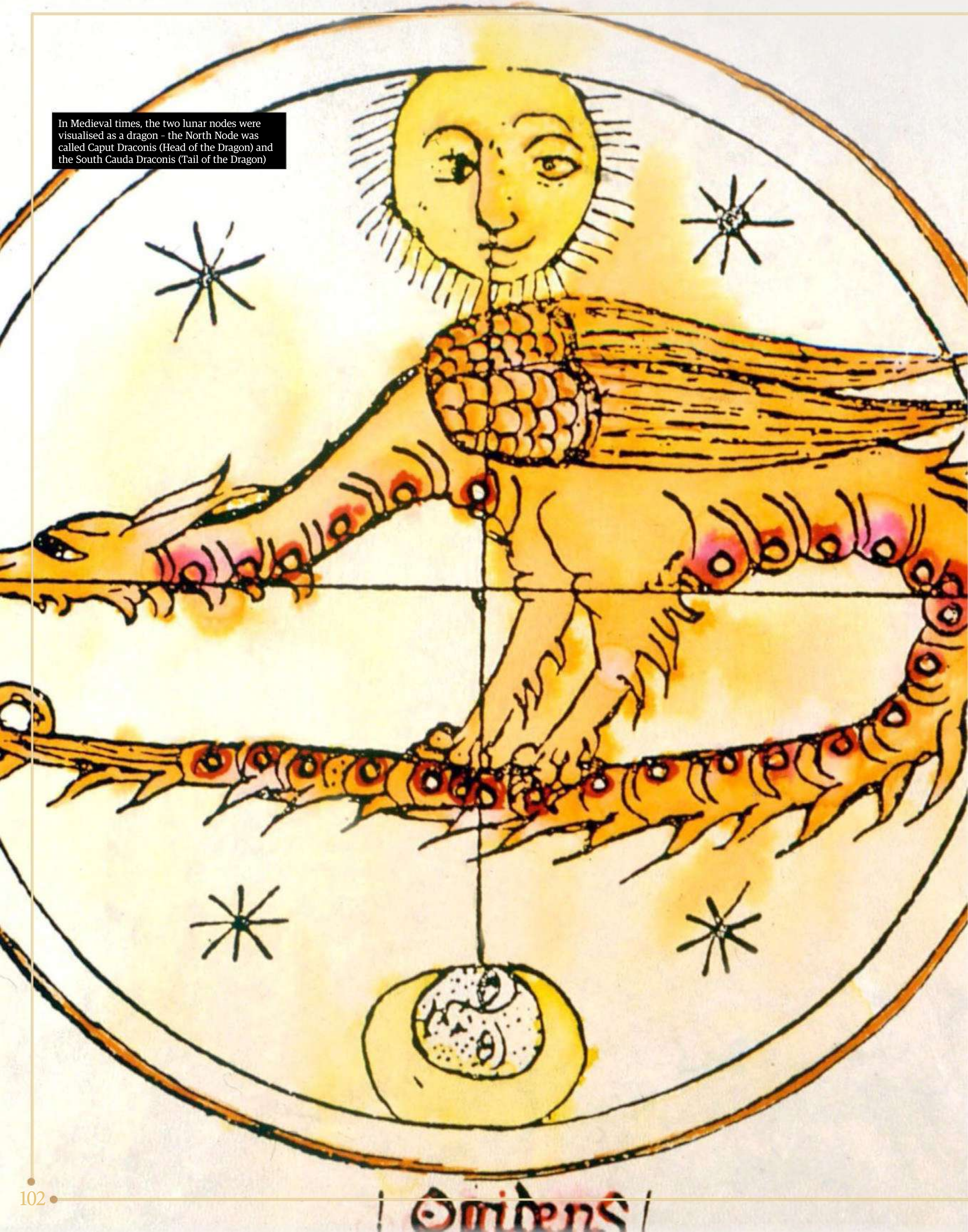


In Medieval times, the two lunar nodes were visualised as a dragon - the North Node was called Caput Draconis (Head of the Dragon) and the South Cauda Draconis (Tail of the Dragon)

Lunar nodes

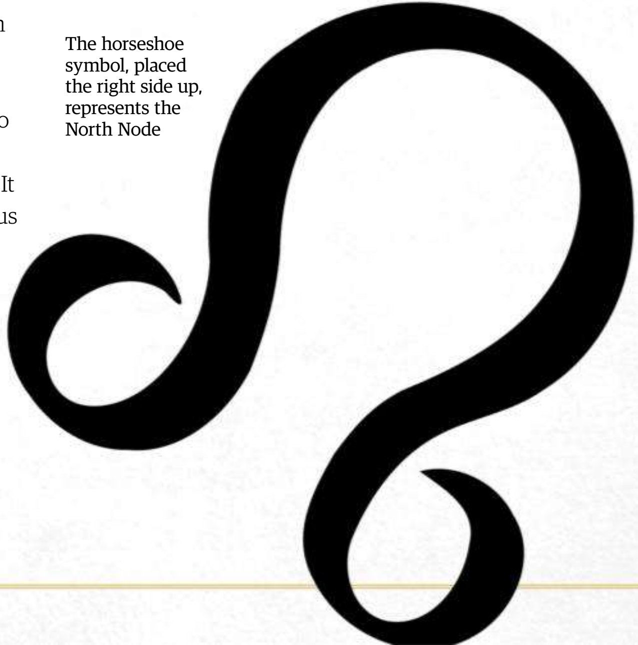
With symbols that look like a pair of horseshoes, one the right way up, the other upside down, the lunar nodes are fascinating elements of an astrologer's chart

Written by Joanna Elphick

You can't see a lunar node as it doesn't physically exist but, to an astrologer, it is a vitally important element of the zodiac wheel. Just like an X on a pirate's treasure map that tells us where the gold is buried, the lunar nodes mark the spot where the Moon's orbital path crosses with the apparent path of the Sun, known as the ecliptic. Of course, all planets will have these points, but only the lunar nodes are taken into consideration by the astrologer at work.

The most commonly used node is the North Node, which is symbolised by a 'horseshoe' drawn the right side up. It represents future opportunities and exciting new experiences that will undoubtedly lead to personal growth and realisation, but may also push the individual out of their comfort zone into new uncharted territory. In this way, the North Node can give a heads-up, pointing out any potential prospects while avoiding missed chances. Because of this, the North Node is sometimes referred to as the Dragon's Head as it gobbles up opportunities as they arise. The South Node, depicted as an upside-down horseshoe, always appears in the sign exactly opposite the North Node. Although it is not always drawn onto the astrological chart, when added it symbolises an individual's past experiences and encounters. It also represents a safe place where the unconscious mind dwells. For some, it can even represent past-life incidents, but this is not commonly taken into consideration. In this way, the North and South Nodes act as the north and south on a compass, displaying the polar opposites of past and future events.

While the planets move counter clockwise, the lunar nodes travel clockwise through the houses of the astrological chart over a period of around 18 and a half years. However, the progress is not uniform and the velocity alters from day to day, making an exact calculation of their whereabouts on any given day quite challenging. Today the 'true node' position can be calculated by a computer, but in the past an astrologer was required to work this out for themselves. This was achieved by calculating the average rate of motion and then averaging this out over the full turn around the wheel. Many traditional astrologers continue to plot the lunar nodes in this fashion, describing it as the 'mean node calculation', but for perfect accuracy, a computer is the way forward.



The horseshoe symbol, placed the right side up, represents the North Node

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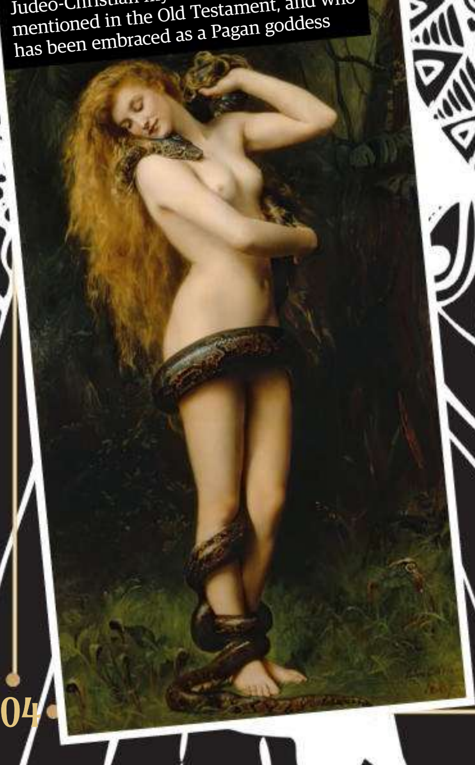
Black Moon Lilith is the point in your horoscope where the Moon is furthest away from the Earth, and can tell you about aspects of yourself you keep hidden



It's named after Lilith, a figure from Judeo-Christian myth who is briefly mentioned in the Old Testament, and who has been embraced as a Pagan goddess

Black Moon Lilith

This secretive point of your horoscope chart is thought to describe personality traits that you hide – and can suggest how to address them, too

Written by April Madden

No, there isn't a secret moon lurking somewhere, Planet X-like, in the Solar System. Black Moon Lilith isn't a moon at all, but a point in space on your chart, a point that, like the rest of the heavenly bodies, can be in different signs of the zodiac depending on your personal horoscope.

The Moon has an elliptical orbit around the Earth: it's sometimes closer to us (known as perigee), and sometimes further away (known as apogee). The point that astrologers call Black Moon Lilith is this apogee: the point in your chart where the Moon was at its furthest from the Earth. Unfortunately, this isn't visible with the naked eye: astrologers work it out mathematically. We can sometimes see its opposite, White Moon Selena, though – when a lunar perigee falls on or near a full Moon, a supermoon lights up the skies!

Black Moon Lilith is named after a figure in Judeo-Christian mythology. She's mentioned in the biblical Book of Isaiah and in Jewish myth as the troublesome first wife of Adam. She refused to obey him and was cast out of the Garden of Eden. In the wilderness, she consorted with the Archangel Samael (who, despite his fearsome reputation and behaviour, is surprisingly not classed as a fallen angel) and lives to this day among screech owls, wild cats and jackals. Medieval folklore paints her as a bogeywoman, who steals sleeping children from their cradles and seduces men in their beds. Some scholars argue that Lilith comes from older stories; the Sumerian goddess of the air, Ninlil, and a wild woman called Kiskililla in Mesopotamian myth, who steals an apple tree from the great goddess Inanna. Both of these figures share similar imagery and stories to Lilith. In ancient alchemical texts and in modern Paganism, however, she has been embraced as a goddess, albeit one with some dark and shadowy aspects.

Your Black Moon Lilith sign, then, tells you about aspects of yourself that a figure like Lilith would preside over – parts of your personality that you keep secret, maybe even that you've been made to feel ashamed of; things that you need to resolve within yourself in order to feel whole. You can easily look up your Black Moon Lilith online, and the meaning of the sign and house it's in. It takes a little bit more effort to find your White Moon Selena, but you can find a handy ephemeris chart for it on **cafeastrology.com** if you search for Black Moon Lilith.

Its opposite, when the Moon is closest to the Earth, is called White Moon Selena after the Greek Moon goddess, and tells you about some of your positive attributes

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Midheaven means 'middle of the sky', but is actually found due south in the Northern Hemisphere and due north in the Southern Hemisphere, getting lower on the horizon the further in the opposite direction from it you go

Midheaven

The Medium Coeli, or Midheaven, is a highly sensitive and immensely powerful point on the astrological chart and has particular significance

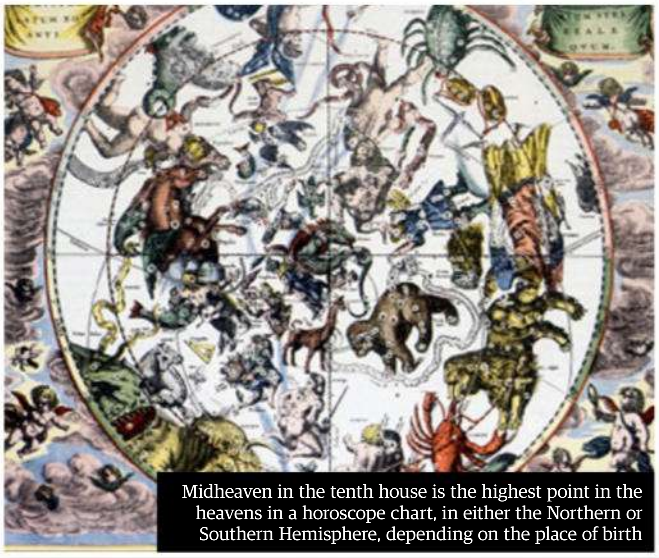
Written by Joanna Elphick

Each of the 12 houses is divided by an imaginary line, also known as a cusp, which moves counter clockwise. Some cusps are considered far more important than others, the most significant being those buttressing the first, fourth, seventh and tenth houses. Also known as the angles of the chart, they are highly significant points on the astrological wheel.

The cusp of the tenth house, or 'zenith', is commonly referred to as the Midheaven since it denotes the highest point in the heavens. It therefore pinpoints the sign and degree that was directly overhead at the time and location of an individual's birth.

Each of the four angles of the chart is associated with one of the cardinal signs of the zodiac, namely Libra, Capricorn, Aries or Cancer, and together they represent defining points in a life from self and others to home and career. The Midheaven is associated with Capricorn, focusing upon an individual's status in society and any ensuing career or, more accurately, a calling that they might have.

This is the area highlighting the image that is outwardly portrayed. It refers to the reputation that precedes someone and also the image that they actively cultivate through pursuing that calling. Astrologers believe that by following the calling demonstrated in the tenth house, an individual will find both success and contentment as it can suggest the area in which you are most likely to thrive, such as a given career path or type of lifestyle. Certain characteristics that are present here can signify just how far an individual can reach in life should they wish to pursue their dreams. The Midheaven therefore points you in the right direction and shows you how to harness your given qualities in order to achieve true success.


Midheaven in the tenth house is the highest point in the heavens in a horoscope chart, in either the Northern or Southern Hemisphere, depending on the place of birth

Midheaven is influenced by its ruling planet, Saturn, along with any other aspects from other planets to the Midheaven. The planet situated in the tenth house at the time of birth will affect an individual's understanding of authority and sway the direction of their calling. This is also heavily influenced by the given sign on the Midheaven. Pisces in the tenth house, for example, guides an individual towards a spiritual path that will enable them to empathise with others, while Aries in the tenth house brings about an ambitious and assertive character who will truly feel successful when given the freedom to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

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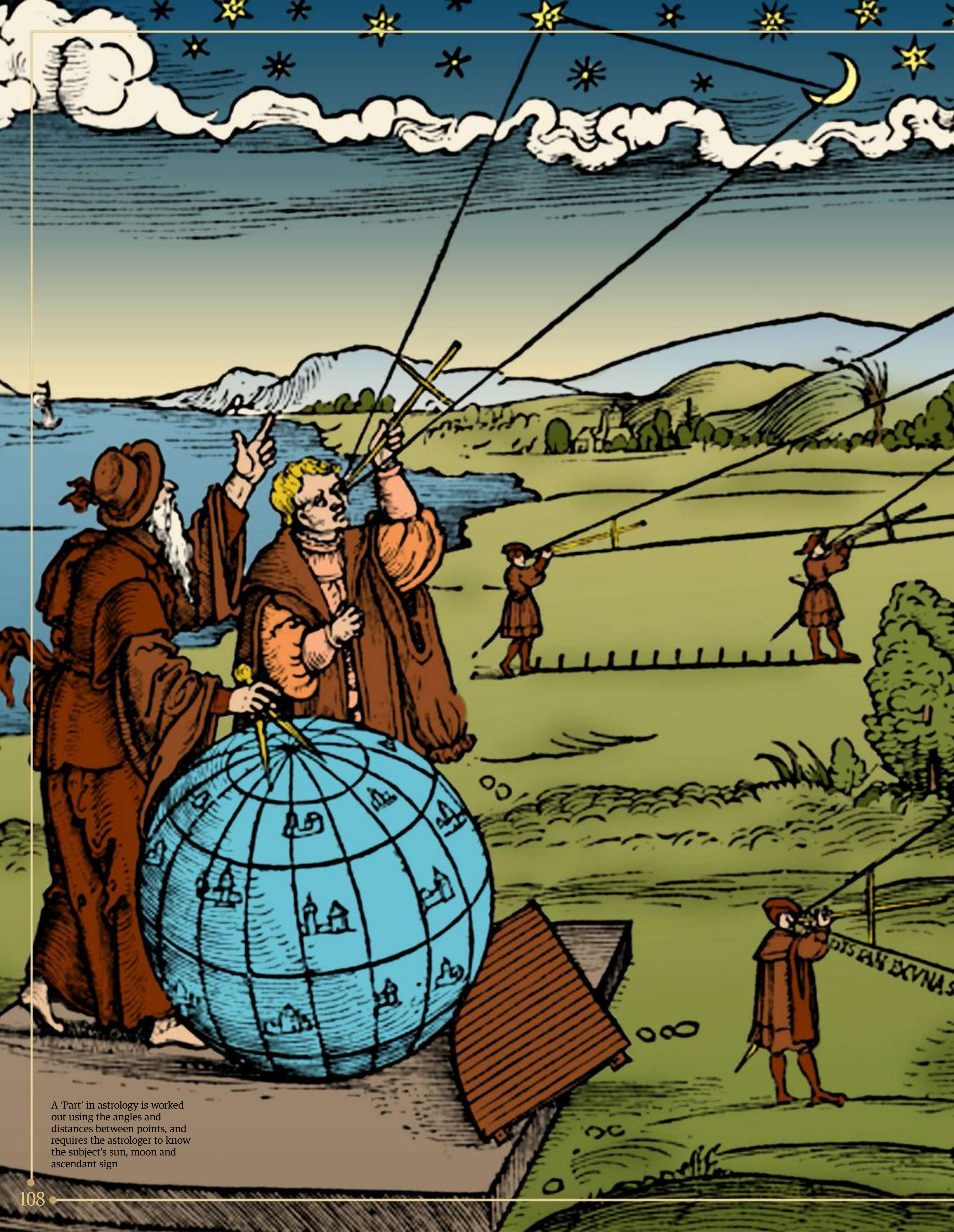


A 'Part' in astrology is worked out using the angles and distances between points, and requires the astrologer to know the subject's sun, moon and ascendant sign

The Part of Fortune

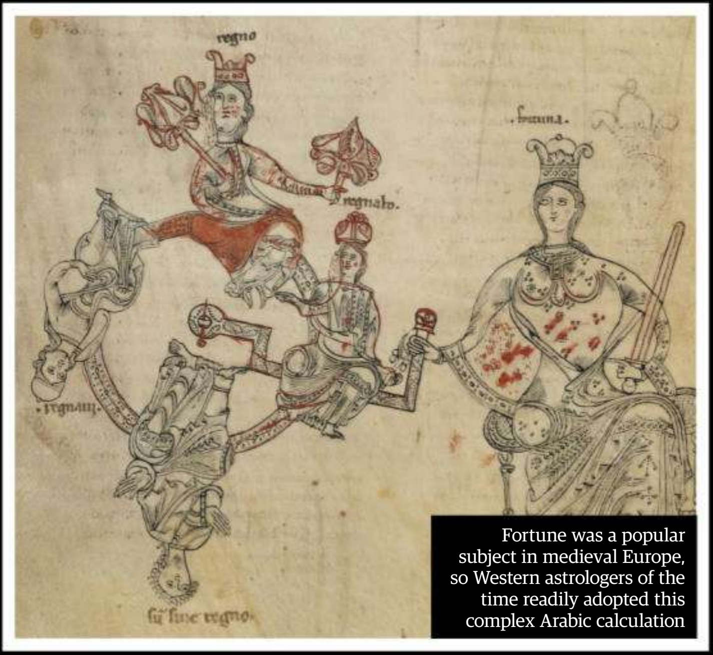
Of all the Arabic Parts in the sky, the Part of Fortune is the most commonly referred to by astrologers

Written by Joanna Elphick

Arabic Parts are decided upon by establishing the distance between two angles or planets in a horoscope and then adding that number to a third angle or planet. This will give the astrologer the degree and sign of the Part. This mathematical technique was developed in Arabia during the Middle Ages and is still used today, although of all the hundreds of Arabic Parts to be found and previously used, the Part of Fortune (otherwise known as the Lot of Fortune) is currently the most commonly referred to. Its symbol is that of a cross within a circle.

The position of the Part of Fortune depends upon the placement of the Sun, the Moon and the ascendant, which is the cusp at the beginning of the first house. Also known as the rising sign, the ascendant is one of the angles of the chart. However, discovering the Part of Fortune is complicated since the mathematical equation differs depending on your time of birth. If you were born during the day, the Sun would be placed above the horizon in your chart and the astrologer would establish the Part of Fortune by adding the ascendant and the Moon together, then subtracting the Sun. If, on the other hand, you were born at night when the Sun is below the horizon, the calculation would consist of adding the Ascendant to the Sun, then subtracting the Moon. This can only be achieved after each planetary placement and sign of the zodiac has been translated into a degree on the horoscopic wheel.

The Part of Fortune represents health and fortune, both in body and material wealth, highlighting your overarching success in life. This in turn can affect personality traits and, ultimately, your ego. How you utilise your talents will depend upon the placement of planets and angles in close proximity to the Part of Fortune, showing you the way to maximise your full potential and prosperity. This will obviously alter depending on the point where the Part of Fortune falls within the wheel and its corresponding sign. Should it fall in the sign of Gemini, for example, the individual will most likely achieve happiness and success through utilisation of their communication skills. Should it fall in Taurus, on the other hand, success will be achieved through productivity. Equally important is the point opposite the Part of Fortune (otherwise known as the Lot of Spirit) since it can block the positive flow of energy if allowed to do so, although on a more positive note it also governs a person's initiative and what use they might make of any gifts, talents or other blessings that they might have.



Fortune was a popular subject in medieval Europe, so Western astrologers of the time readily adopted this complex Arabic calculation

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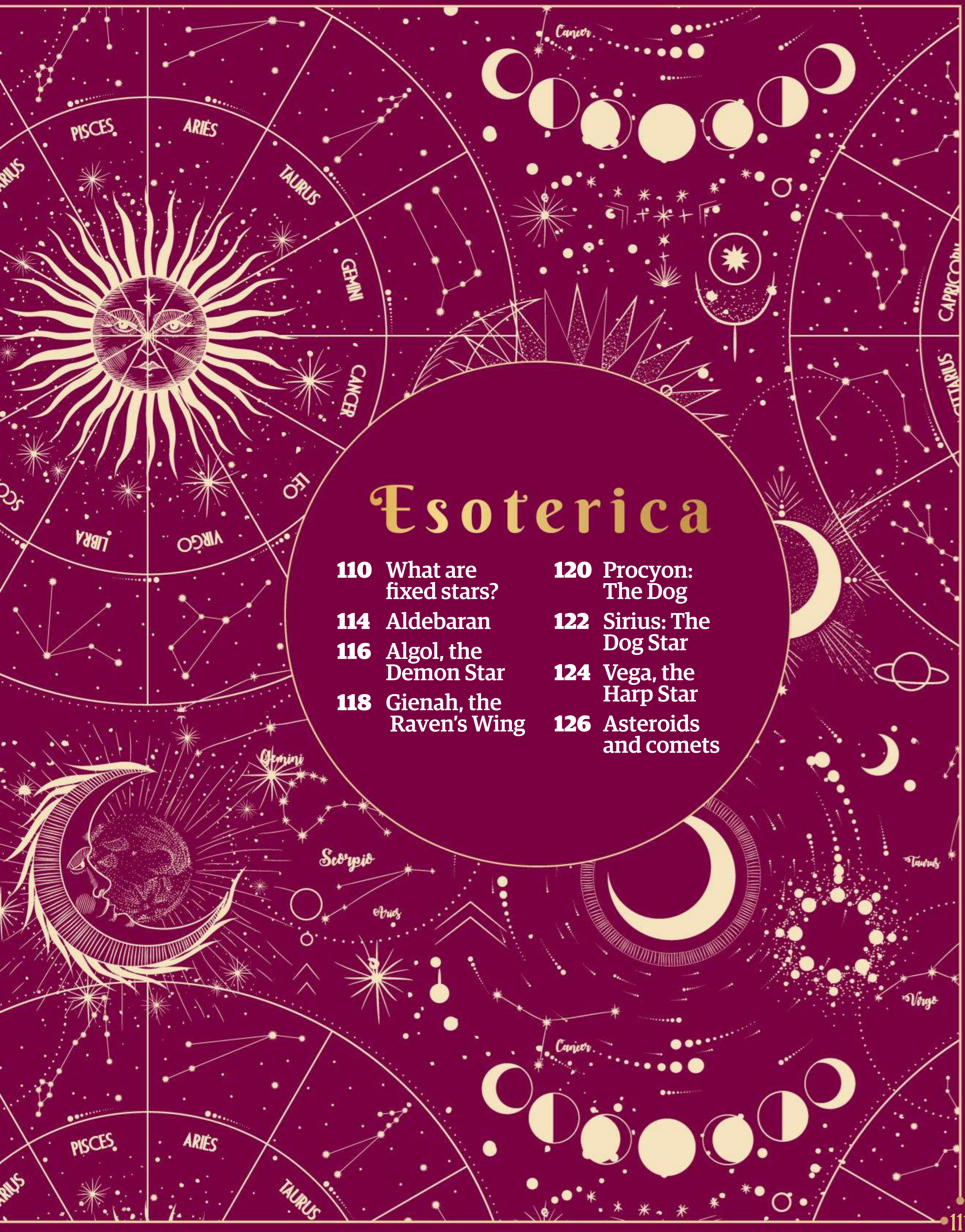
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Esoterica

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What are fixed stars?

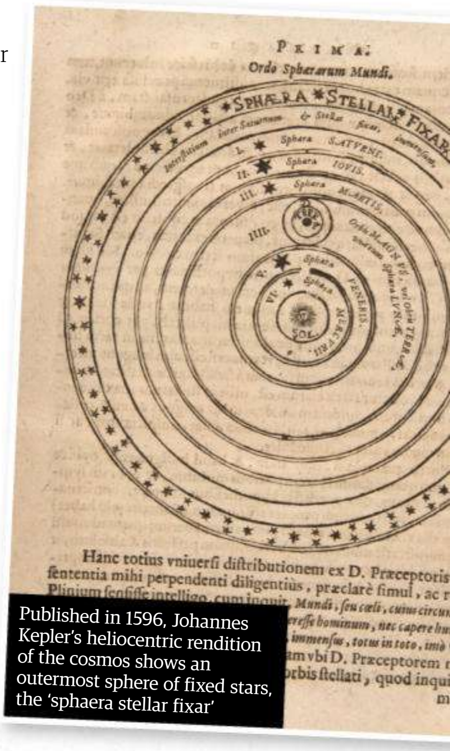
When we talk about astrology, we talk about our stars, but what role do actual stars play when it comes to the astrologer's craft?

Written by Catherine Curzon

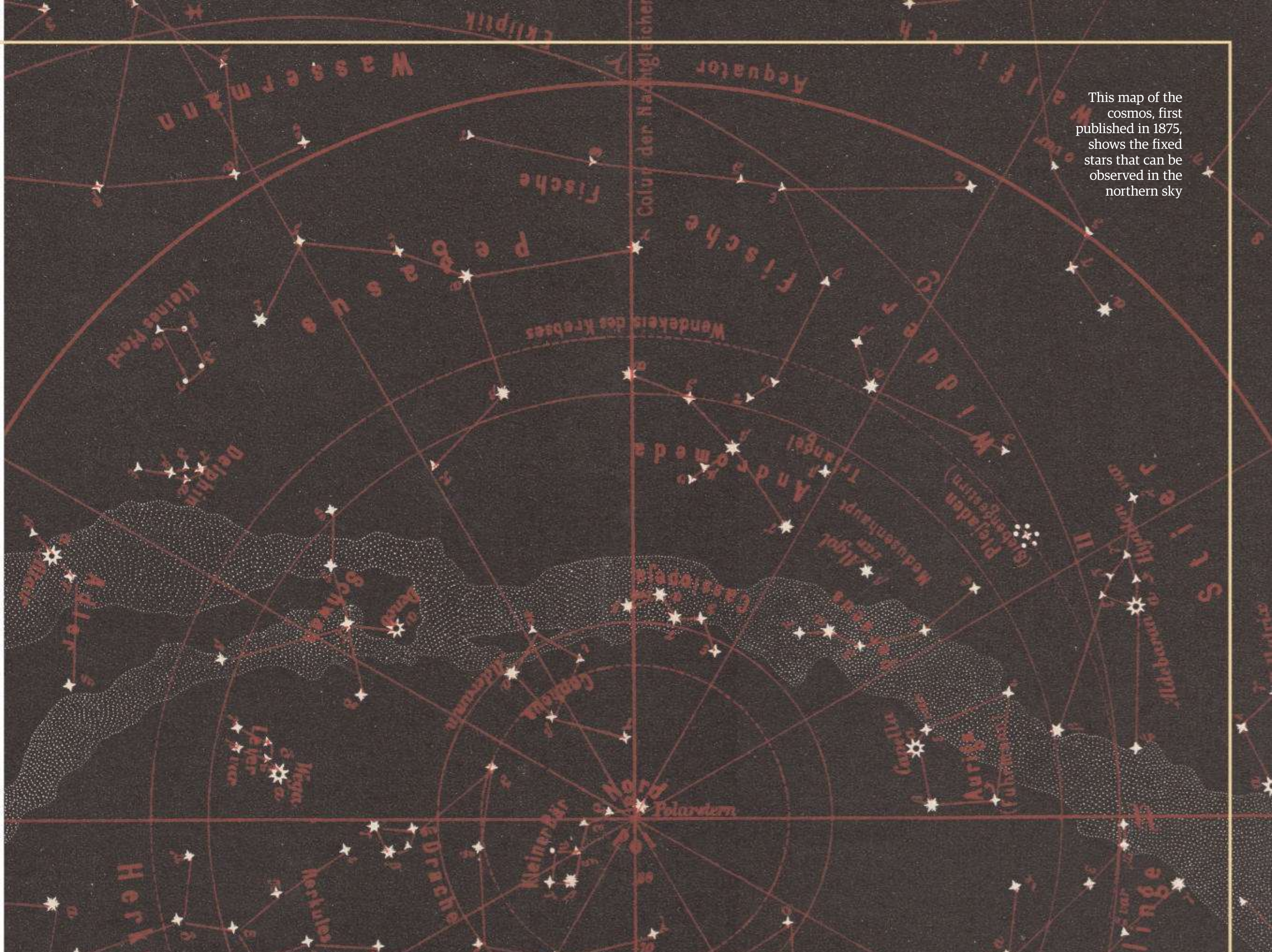
When astrologers talk about stars, they're usually referring to a broad astrological concept, rather than the actual astral bodies that twinkle in the night sky above us. Astrology tends to focus on the planets, and the innumerable stars that dust the heavens don't always play a role in the predictions of astrology. Yet those actual stars, known in astrology as 'fixed stars', can play a significant role in understanding and mapping destiny. To see them and start to understand their influence, one need simply look up at the sky on a clear night.

Astrologers believe that each planet has a unique set of energies, and that these energies are gleaned from the combined energies of the stars through which it travels. After all, the whole Solar System relies on the energy of one all-powerful star – the Sun – so to dismiss stars out of hand might prove to be a mistake. In astrological charts, the Sun can be said to divide its energies across the entire Solar System, and the planets and bodies it contains. These energies, of course, aren't divided equally, just as human life is never truly completely in balance. By understanding the way the fixed stars influence these imbalances, astrologers can examine ways in which they can also be changed and put into better balance. In Buddhism, this effort to achieve some balance in the chart is known as the Middle Path. It is the key to enlightenment.

Throughout history, our ancient ancestors have observed and been guided by the stars. They identified groups of stars that seemed to form shapes, and assigned these constellations names, each with its basis in mythology. They believed that each star in the heavens had its own energy and points of influence and that, since fixed stars permanently occupy their place in the celestial sphere, these energies and influences are precise, definite and unchanging, unlike the ever-moving planets. These stars might bring great fortune, or great tragedy, and a true understanding of their influence can only be achieved by interpreting them in relation to the planets around them, and their positioning in relation to the star in question. The stars alone do not influence the charts of an individual, but each star emphasises the qualities of the planet to which it is being related. Hence the saying, 'born under a lucky star'.



Published in 1596, Johannes Kepler's heliocentric rendition of the cosmos shows an outermost sphere of fixed stars, the 'sphaera stellar fixar'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Widder
Andromeda
Triangel
Delphin
Adler
Schwan
Cassiopeja
Perseus
Medusenhaupt
Algol
Plejaden (Siebengestirn)
Stier
Aldebaran
Leier
Wega
Cepheus
Nord
Polarstern
Kleiner Bär
Drache
Herkules
Capella
Auriga (Fuhrmann)
Zwillinge

This map of the cosmos, first published in 1875, shows the fixed stars that can be observed in the northern sky

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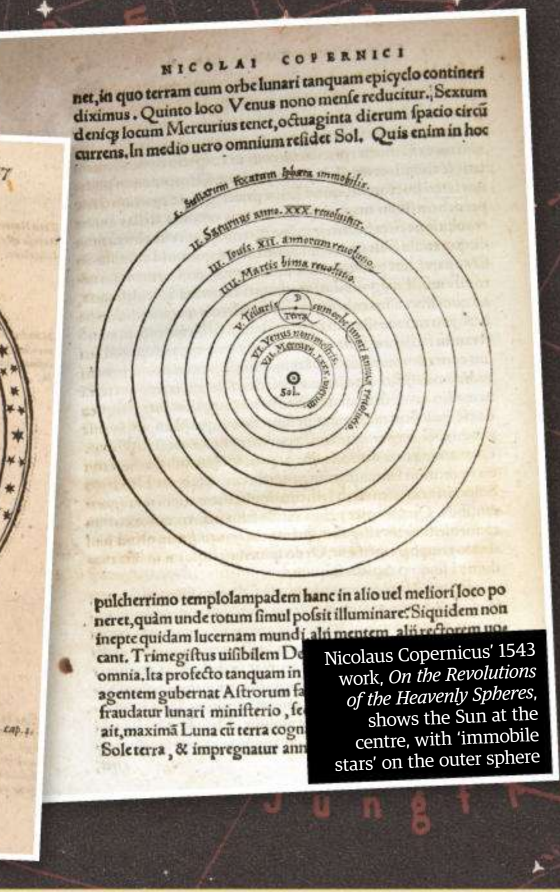

NICOLAI COPERNICI

net, in quo terram cum orbe lunari tanquam epicyclo contineri diximus. Quinto loco Venus nono menſe reducitur. Sextum denique locum Mercurius tenet, octuaginta dierum ſpacio circū currens. In medio uero omnium reſidet Sol. Quis enim in hoc

I. Stellarum fixarum ſphæra immobilis.
II. Saturnus anno. XXX. reuolitur.
III. Iouis. XII. annorum reuolutio.
IIII. Martis bima reuolutio.
V. Telluris cum orbe lunari annua reuolutio
Terra
VI. Venus nonimestris.
VII. Mercurius. LXXX. dierum
Sol.

pulcherrimo templo lampadem hanc in alio uel meliori loco poneret, quàm unde totum ſimul poſsit illuminare? Siquidem non inepte quidam lucernam mundi, alij mentem, alij rectorem uocant. Trimegiſtus uiſibilem De
omnia. Ita profecto tanquam in
agentem gubernat Aſtrorum fa
fraudatur lunari miniſterio, ſe
ait, maximā Luna cū terra cogn
Sole terra, & impregnatur ann

Nicolaus Copernicus' 1543 work, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, shows the Sun at the centre, with 'immobile stars' on the outer sphere

© Getty Images, Creative Commons; Johannes Kepler, Nicolaus Copernicus

Aldebaran

The brightest star in the zodiac constellation Taurus, Aldebaran is a sentinel situated in the left eye of the bull

Written by Catherine Curzon

Five thousand years ago, the fixed star Aldebaran was known as one of the four Guardians of the Sky, the so-called Royal Stars used in Persia to mark the vernal equinox. The Eastern Royal Star, it was a sentinel, standing guard over the other stars in the sky. Aldebaran is situated in the eye of the zodiac constellation Taurus, the bull, and is called by some the Watcher in the East, or an archangel star, alongside Antares, Fomalhaut and Regulus.

Sitting as it does in the eye of Taurus, Aldebaran is seen as representative of the third eye, or the consciousness. It is the star of illumination, and sits directly opposite Antares, in polar opposite to it. If Aldebaran suggests illumination and insight, Antares is the star of wrath and revenge.

Yet Aldebaran cannot always be relied upon to offer wisdom and insight. It is also associated with leaders, whether in business, politics, monarchy or battle. When it is unbalanced, Aldebaran represents restlessness, sometimes rabble-rousing people, and those who favour aggressive action over diplomacy. Yet it also carried with it the promise of triumph and, from that triumph, immense riches and privilege. With its bright orange colouring, it's little surprise that Aldebaran has long been associated with Mars, the bringer of war and power, and among the archangel stars, Aldebaran represents Michael, the warrior. Depending on its place in the chart and in relation to the planets, this fixed star can be a symbol of war and battle, but not necessarily victory, as many military commanders have learned to their cost after launching an attack in the belief that Aldebaran's influence is in their favour.

Yet Aldebaran is not merely a star of power. It is also suggestive of a devastating charm, which may well mean that the skills of a warrior are not needed at all. Those with Aldebaran and Taurus in their chart are full of ambition and self-belief, but they must be mindful of the flipside to this. Once again, they will not always prevail.

Should we look more to the reading of Aldebaran as the third eye? Although readings then become more spiritual. While Aldebaran can influence the earthly power of an individual, it can also influence their illumination and their vision in the most cosmic sense. Aldebaran can offer revelations of a spiritual kind, and enable us to choose a path for the future not by political or warlike means, but by following our own enlightened vision.

The occultation of Alderbaran by the Moon. The Moon dwarves the always bright Aldebaran, the tiny red dot to its right

The bright star, Aldebaran, shines out from the depths of the breathtaking Hyades cluster. It is a fixed star symbolic of illumination and insight

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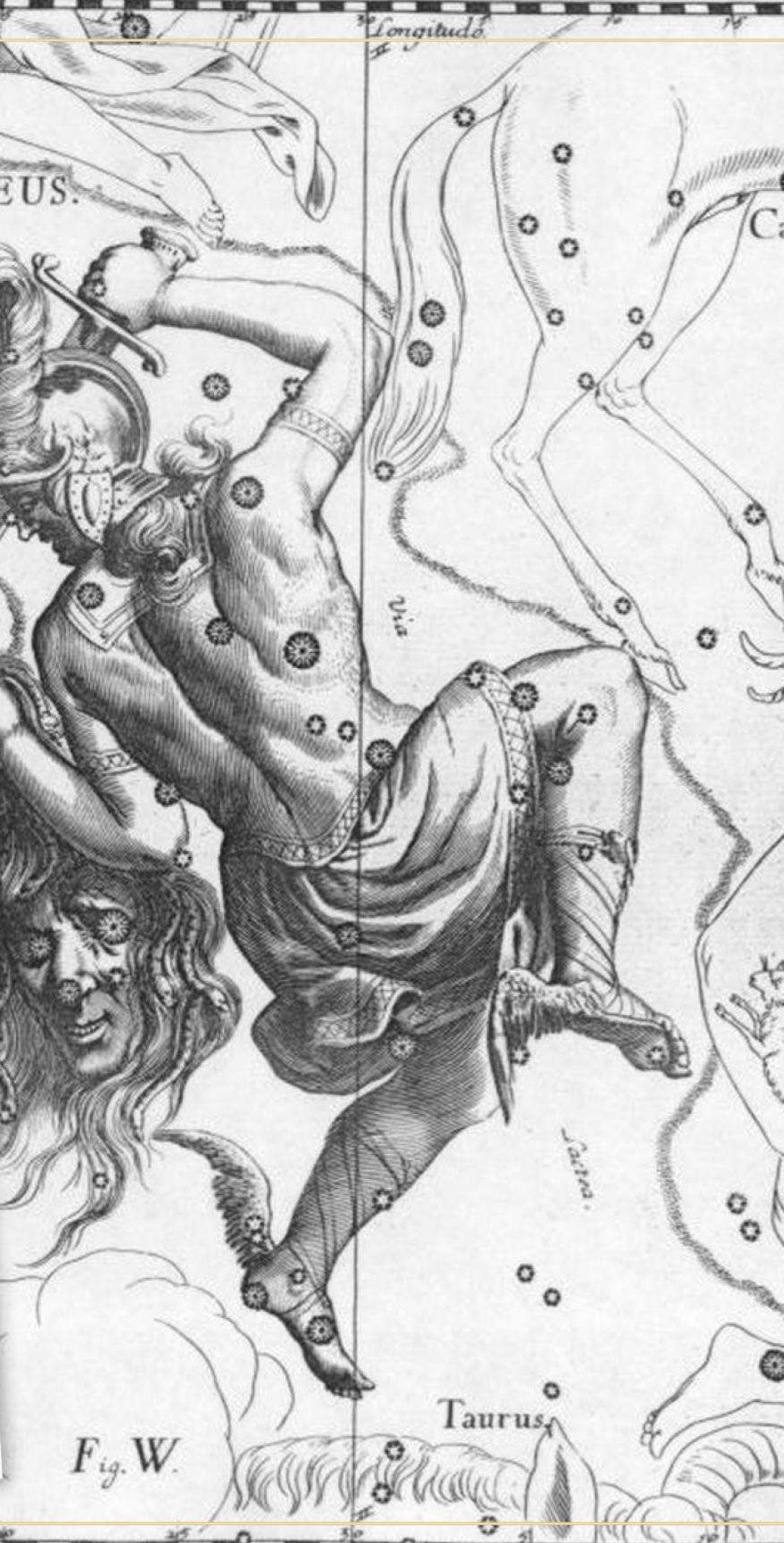
Aldebaran, one of the four Guardians of the Sky, is the most dazzling star in the constellation of Taurus, the Bull

When Perseus cut off Medusa's head, he ended her reign of terror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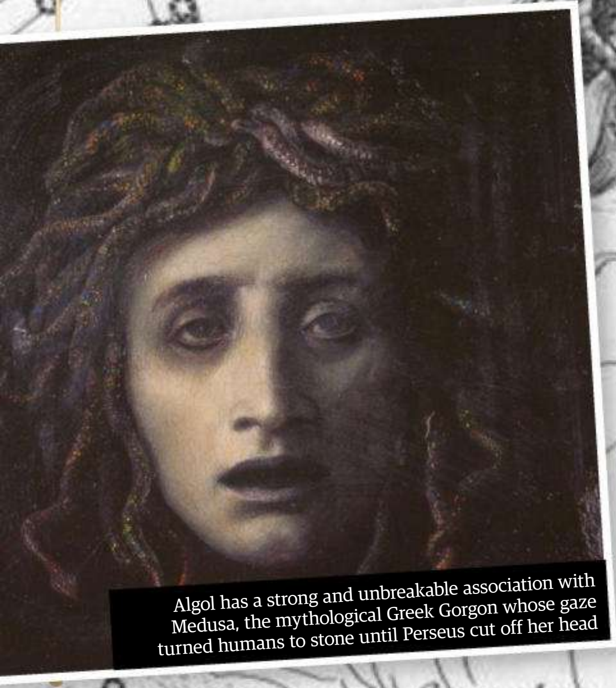


Algol has a strong and unbreakable association with Medusa, the mythological Greek Gorgon whose gaze turned humans to stone until Perseus cut off her head

Algol, the Demon Star

Though at first glance it might appear sinister, Ptolemy's Demon Star is far less frightening than its dramatic name might suggest!

Written by Catherine Curzon

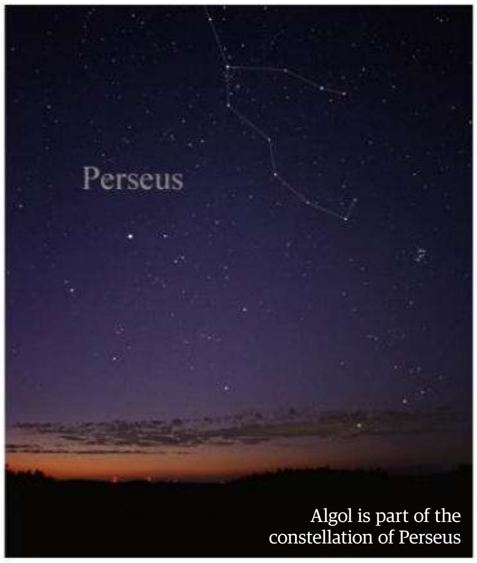
Algol is part of the constellation of Perseus. This fixed star has a strong and unbreakable association with Medusa, the mythological Greek Gorgon whose gaze turned humans to stone until Perseus cut off her head, ending her reign of terror. It's little wonder then that Algol is often thought of as a malefic star, and one who signifies violence and chaos. Algol's cause wasn't helped in ancient times by the fact that the star is eclipsed for eight hours every three days, making it appear as though the star could simply vanish and reappear from the heavens seemingly at will.

Yet Medusa's story is far more than her battle with Perseus. She was once a temple virgin, who was raped by Neptune. Pallas Athena chose to punish Medusa and turned her into the fearsome Gorgon of myth. After Medusa was slain, Pallas Athena mounted her head on her shield, and even in death her gaze could still petrify enemies. As such, Medusa became a weapon and a vital element in victory over one's enemies.

Because of Algol's association with the decapitated Medusa, the fixed star has become associated with a rather less literal form of beheading, namely the toppling of heads of state, especially those who lack the emotional intelligence to recognise their situation and take steps to evade it.

For those who believe in the malefic power of Algol, realising that this star is associated with their chart can be a source of considerable worry. It seems to suggest that something catastrophic is lurking in the future, whether a metaphorical beheading or an impending, unspecified disaster. In fact, that needn't be the case at all. Rather than heralding tragedy, Algol might be offering us the chance to overcome an obstacle that will change our life forever, but not necessarily for the worse.

Algol is not necessarily a bringer of revolution, violence and malevolence. Just as the Gorgon's head protected Pallas Athena in battle, so too can the fixed star Algol shield us from harm. Of course, Pallas Athena only realised the protecting power of Medusa's gaze when she was in the heat of battle, but in the midst of rather less literal battles of our own, Algol stands with us, leading us through the challenges and into the next stage of our development.



Algol is part of the constellation of Perseus

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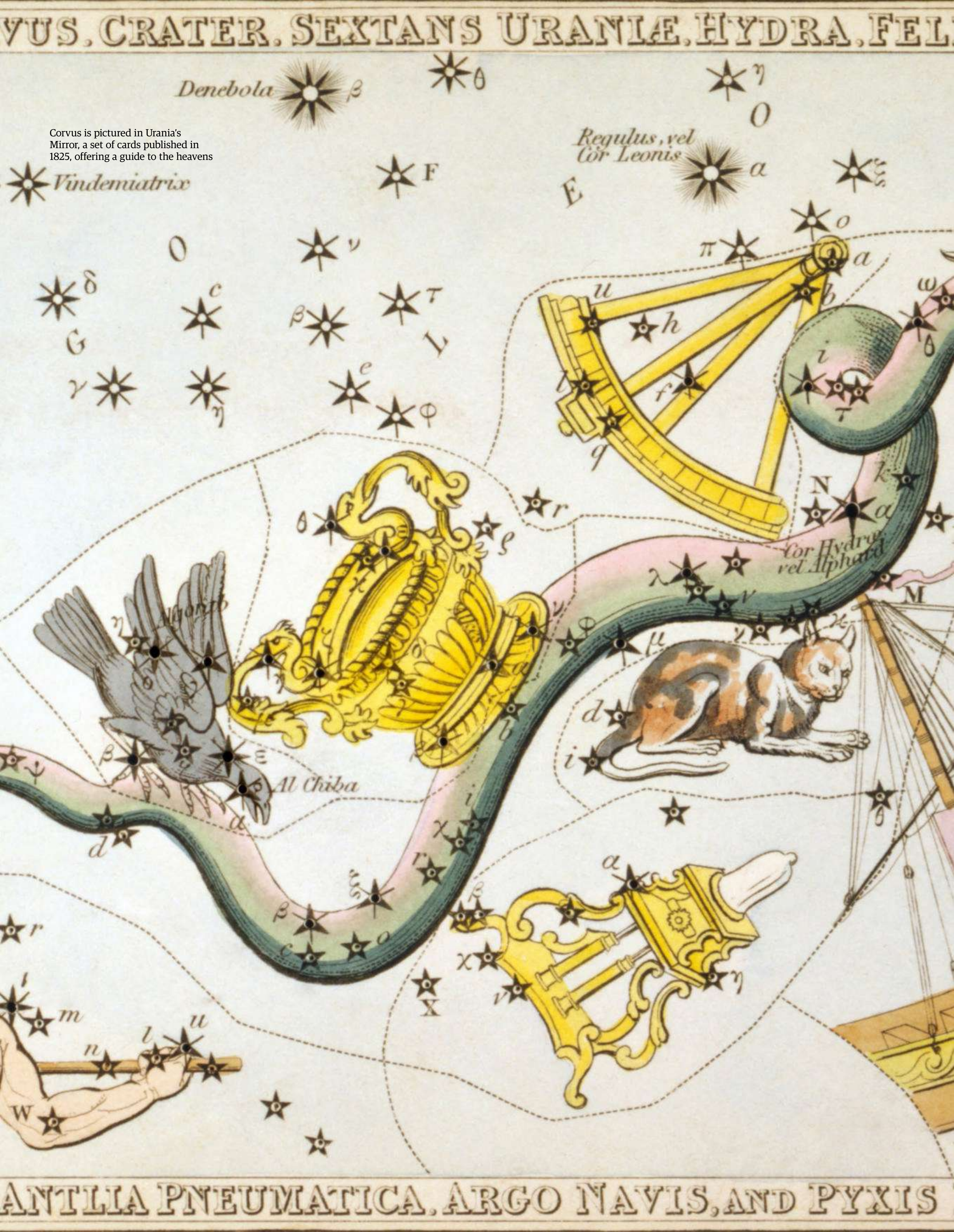
VUS, CRATER, SEXTANS URANIÆ, HYDRA, FEL
Denebola
Regulus, vel Cor Leonis
Vindemiatrix
Cor Hydræ vel Alphard
Algorab
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ANTLIA PNEUMATICA, ARGO NAVIS, AND PYXIS

Corvus is pictured in Urania's Mirror, a set of cards published in 1825, offering a guide to the heavens

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Gienah, the Raven's Wing

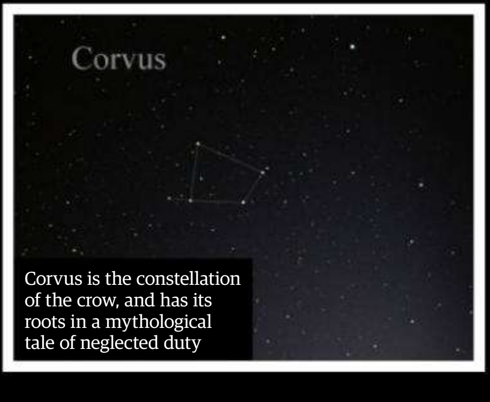
Situated on the wing of the raven, Gienah Corvi is a star that enjoys, or is perhaps cursed with, a sinister reputation

Written by Catherine Curzon

The fixed star Gienah takes its name from the Arabic al-janāh al-ghirāb al-yaman, which translates as, 'the right wing of the crow'. Though it isn't the alpha star of the constellation, Gienah Corvus is the brightest. It is also the fixed star that astrologers look to when studying the constellation of Corvus. Many centuries ago, Gienah Corvi was one of the 15 Behenian fixed stars, which were considered instrumental in Medieval magic. Each of the 15 stars was associated with a plant and a gemstone, which would represent it in magical rituals. Gienah's associations were with burdock and onyx.

In mythology, Corvus was the raven servant of Apollo. Though Corvus was a tireless and loyal servant, when Apollo gave the raven his cup and asked him to fill it with water, the bird shirked his task to enjoy some fresh figs. As Corvus waited for the figs to open, many days passed, and when the raven realised how long he had been absent, he came up with a lie to cover his tracks. He snatched up the serpent Hydra in his talons, and told Apollo that Hydra had tried to stop him from retrieving the water. The furious Apollo threw Corvus, the cup and the Hydra into the heavens, decreeing that Corvus would not be able to drink as long as there were still unripe figs on Earth. The cup was forever just out of the thirsty raven's reach, protected for all time by the Hydra.

Given the duplicity of the raven in the mythical story, it is of little surprise to learn that Gienah Corvi has a reputation as a malefic star. This is, of course, taking the symbolism of the raven in the most literal sense. It is, after all, a bird that has been regarded through the ages as a sinister creature, and one associated with darkness and even death. Gienah Corvi is a star that suggests one should be wary of the possibility of succumbing to material greed or cunning, and hot-headed revenge. It is also associated with selfish ambition, with little regard for others and those born under this particular star can often become seen as agitators, or instigators. It's also thought of as having similar influences to Mars and Saturn. However, Ptolemy noted that it could be used to influence and enhance healing herbs like comfrey, if this was done in a positive aspect of the Moon.



Corvus is the constellation of the crow, and has its roots in a mythological tale of neglected duty

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Procyon, the Dog

Feared by some, favoured by others, Procyon might foretell of impending disaster, but it could also rain down wealth

Written by Catherine Curzon

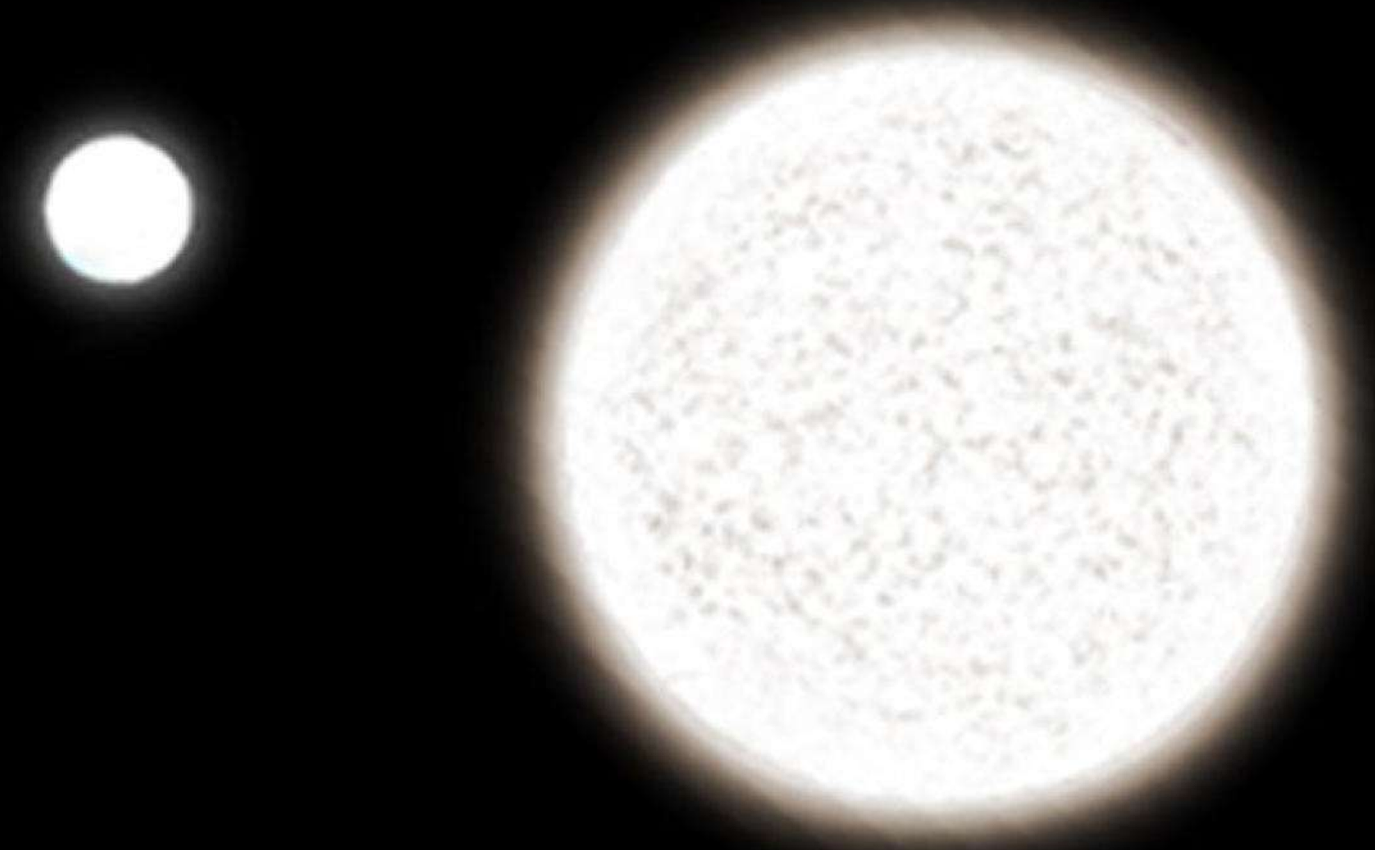
Canis Minor, the constellation of the Lesser Dog, was once known as Procyon, a reference to its leading and brightest star. Procyon is a star of a changeable nature, and has long been considered an unfortunate star to have in one's chart, because its darker elements can be perceived to outweigh the benefits of their opposite values. Procyon's nature is alike to those of Mercury and Mars, namely prone to impetuous and often ill-thought-out, careless behaviour. It might signify sudden violence or unexpected disaster. It might also, however, signify something far more positive, and those with Procyon in their charts can achieve great things with the right attitude and some direction.

The constellation Procyon takes its name from the mythological and beloved dog of Helen of Troy. Upon the death of her adored pet, Helen became so distraught that she prayed for him to be brought back to life. He was restored to her as a constellation, where he would be able to play in the heavens for all eternities. Like the puppy from which it was supposedly created, Procyon has enjoyed some association with very literal dog or animal bites, but there are far less obvious readings of Procyon than this. This star can signify impetuous acts, just like a puppy acts on instinct and without considering the consequences of its actions. Procyon, it could be said, might bite in more ways than one.

Yet like the mischievous canine that gives it its name, Procyon can bring joy and pleasure too. When well-placed, Procyon's negative aspects are turned on their heads and transformed into an unbreakable will and drive to succeed. Those who are able to navigate the vagaries of Procyon's influence can make excellent and energetic leaders, who are shrewd, commanding and successful, but given to acting first, and thinking later. Just like a trained dog, pursuing its prey to the last and receiving a reward for its pains, Procyon can see tenacity met with great success and financial rewards, but it comes with plenty of caveats. If the rewards Procyon can take into account are to be long-lasting, then the impetuous and aggressive side of the star cannot be allowed to flourish.

Once the dog of Helen of Troy, her sadness at her pet's death caused the initial creation of Canis Minor

Shining out of Canis Minor, Procyon is a changeable star, that can bring the threat of violence, or the promise of riches



Situated in the top left of this image, Procyon is a bright star. Associated very literally with animal attacks, it can bite back

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Sirius, the Dog Star

Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, is one of the most important and well-regarded fixed stars in the heavens

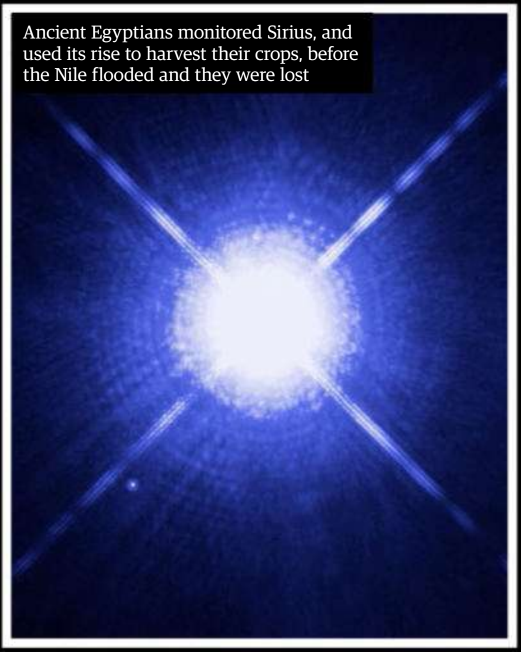
Written by Catherine Curzon

Sirius is the brightest star and one of the most well known stars in the heavens, and has long been of enormous importance to those who watch the skies. The very earliest astrologers recognised only one constellation, which they called the Dog, and today we know this constellations as Canis Major, the place where Sirius resides. According to mythology, Canis Major was once the dog of Orion, the Hunter, and the faithful hound now stands ever ready to spring into action at the command of his master. Sirius, of course, is perhaps most famously known by the name the Dog Star, and has been associated with fierce heat, in keeping with its potentially dangerous position in the mouth of the dog. Its name means 'scorcher'.

In ancient Egypt, astronomers believed that Sirius's rising predicted the flooding of the Nile, and the height of a blazing summer. When Sirius (known to the ancient Egyptians as Sopdet and to the Hellenic Egyptians as Sothis) was approaching its height, farmers knew that the time had come to reap their harvest before the waters ruined it. Far from a portent of doom, it was a friend to those who worked the land. In fact, this bright star has long enjoyed associations with heat and summer, and not always positively. It has been seen as a portent of danger, particularly that of fire or drought. During the 'dog days' of summer it was believed to add its heat to the Sun's, provoking fever. According to some early astrologers, those born under Sirius combine fearlessness with over-indulgence, a potentially messy combination.

Despite these less-than-positive interpretations, Sirius is generally considered to be a highly favourable star in one's chart, and one that can bestow welcome benefits on those who enjoy its influence. Sirius brings with it good luck, fortune and an unwavering sense of ambition, with the intelligence to pull it off and make a long-term success of talent and opportunities. However, while Sirius can create inspirational leaders and enormously successful people, it does not offer such triumphs without asking for something in return. Sirius demands that those who enjoy its benefits have the intelligence and conscience to do so without ruthlessness. If they don't, fortune can be fleeting. So though this fixed star has been credited with indicating heavenly preferment, shining on strong leaders in a variety of fields, its undercurrent of intemperance is something that cannot be ignored.

Just like the dog whose mouth it resides in, Sirius can be watchful, alert and highly disciplined, but it can also be unpredictable and ungoverned, and have a tendency to snap back when least expected.



Ancient Egyptians monitored Sirius, and used its rise to harvest their crops, before the Nile flooded and they were lost

Sirius, also known as the Dog Star, is the brightest star in the sky. For centuries, it has been observed by astrologers

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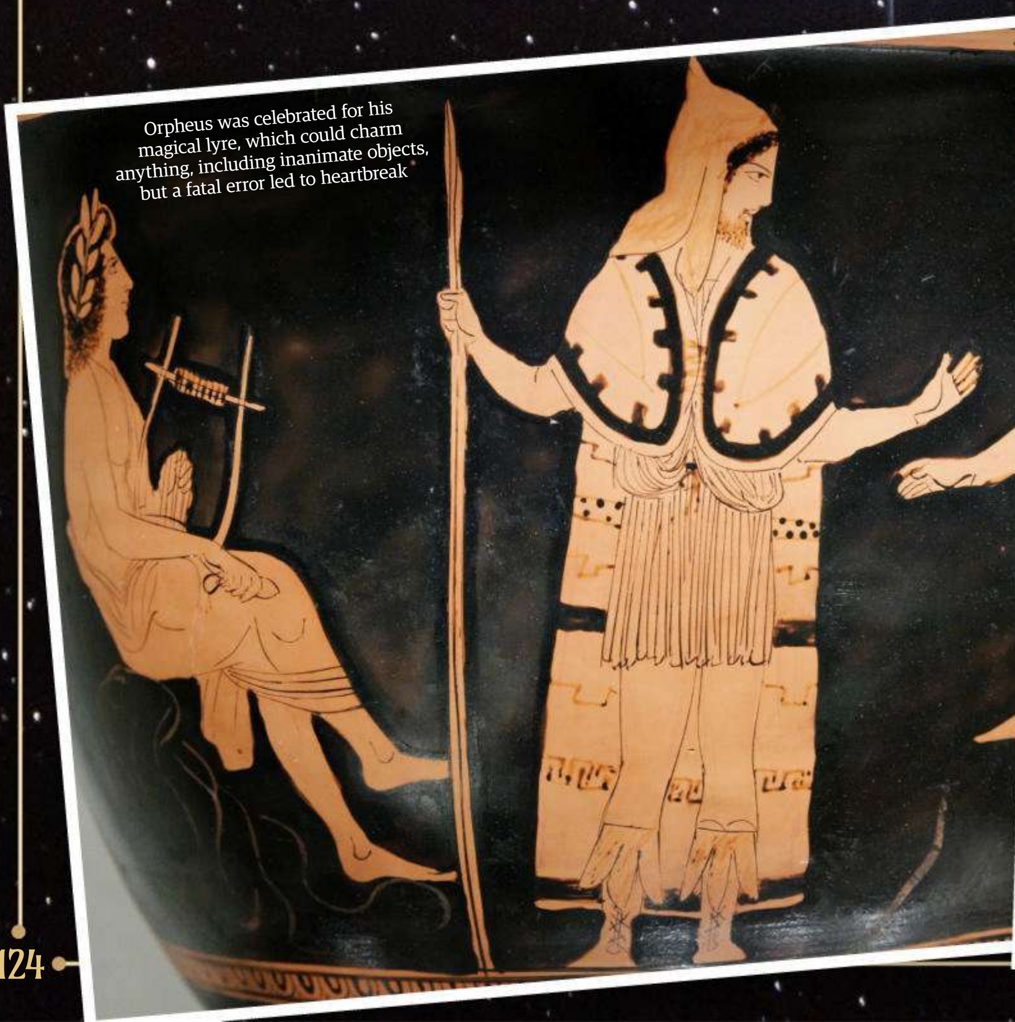
Once, more than 12,000 years ago, Vega was the pole star. In 14000 CE, it will return to the pole



Orpheus was celebrated for his magical lyre, which could charm anything, including inanimate objects, but a fatal error led to heartbreak

Vega sits in the constellation of Lyra, and influences creative abilities and success

Vega, the Harp Star

Vega is a pole star associated with the arts, and it is situated on the handle of a celestial harp

Written by Catherine Curzon

Vega, sometimes known as Wega, is a pole star that takes its name from the Arabic word wāqi, which means falling. This name comes from the ancient name for the constellation in which it is situated, which was once known as the Falling Eagle, or Falling Vulture. Today that constellation is better known as Lyra, the lyre. As long ago as 12000 BCE, Vega was the pole star, and it will return to the pole in 14000 CE.

The constellation of Lyra takes its name from the first ever lyre, an instrument that was fashioned by Hermes and played by Orpheus. According to mythology, the music Orpheus coaxed from the instrument was so enchanting that even inanimate objects fell in love with it, and the melodies charmed the waters and flora that heard it. It was so powerful that it alone could silence the Sirens, whose songs spelled the death of travellers.

When Orpheus' wife, Eurydice, died after she was bitten by a snake, Orpheus went into the underworld to search for her. His music enchanted Hades himself, who allowed Eurydice to return to her husband on the condition that Orpheus wouldn't look back until the couple had left the underworld. Tragically, at the very last moment, Orpheus glanced back, condemning his bride to an eternity in the underworld. For the rest of his life, he shunned the music of his magical lyre, wandering the world and mourning the loss of his beloved Eurydice. When Orpheus died, his magical lyre was placed in the heavens, as a permanent memorial to his name and his music.

Known by the Babylonians as 'the Star of the Queen of Life', it is no surprise to learn that Vega has high pretensions. Those born under this creative star have a natural talent for all manner of artistic pursuits, but they can be given to a certain pretentiousness when it comes to their art. However, by contrast they can also be extremely optimistic, and will always try to see the good in any situation. Vega is a star that often speaks of a desire to enjoy the trappings of fame, such as wealth and debauchery, and those born under it can sometimes pursue their dreams of stardom to their own detriment and beyond. Though immensely talented, just like Orpheus they must take care not to believe that these talents make them more special than they are, or their successes might prove to be fleeting.

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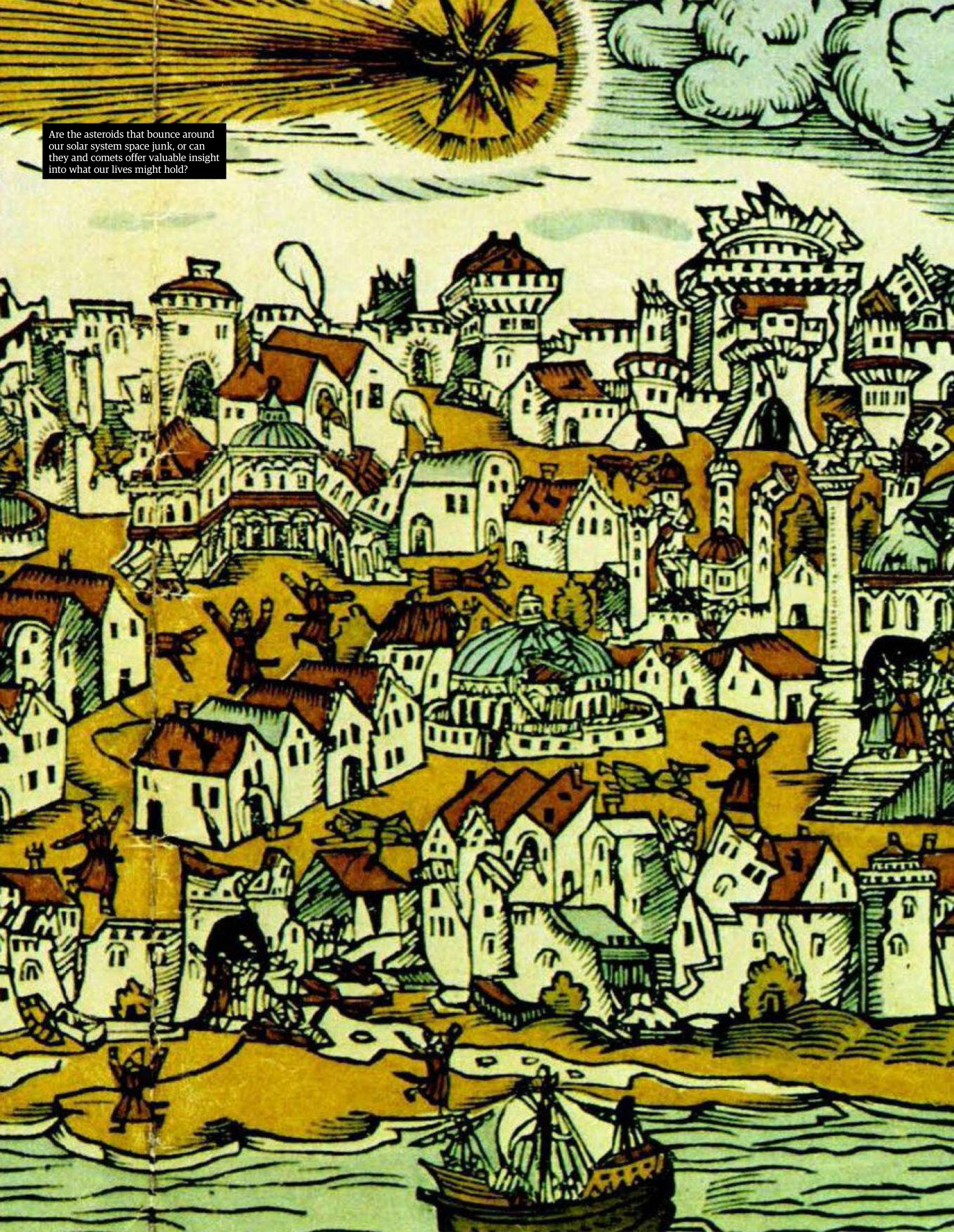


Are the asteroids that bounce around our solar system space junk, or can they and comets offer valuable insight into what our lives might hold?

Asteroids and comets

The heavens are filled with innumerable asteroids and comets, and an understanding of them can greatly enhance an astrologer's skill

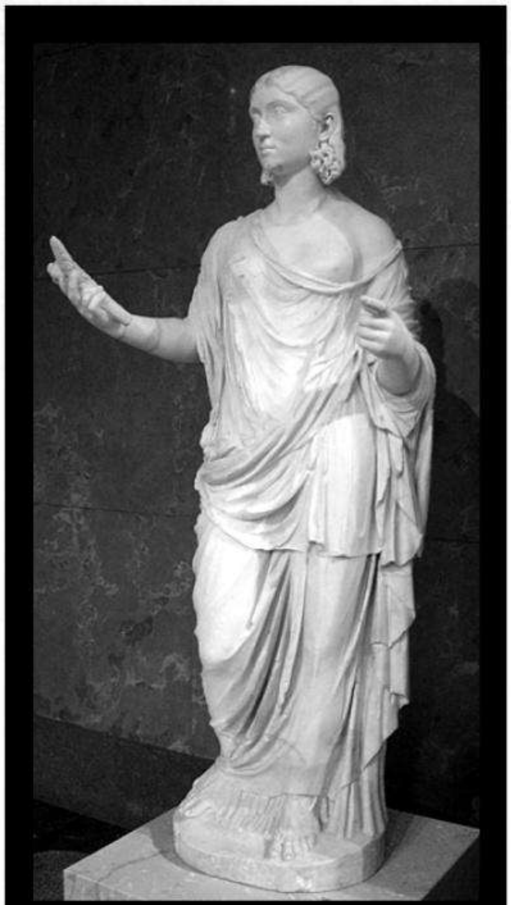
Written by Catherine Curzon

Though it may seem surprising given the long history of astrology and the centuries of study that humankind has devoted to the heavens, asteroids and comets are still not widespread in the astrological world. Asteroids in particular remain a point of contention, with some astrologers believing that the sheer number of them renders them meaningless, while others look to them for nuance.

While their critics decry them as random space junk, asteroids have their champions. Recognising that it would be an impossibility to try and interpret each one, they have focused their efforts instead on a smaller number of major asteroids to which a specific set of meanings are usually attached. If a particular asteroid appears entirely unconnected to a reading, it might be disregarded. In order to aid their understanding, astrologers have sought to focus on five major asteroids. Four of these are known as the asteroid goddesses, a marked contrast to the mostly masculine planets.

In contrast to asteroids, comets have appeared in astrological study from as far back as the 4th century. Once these balls of fire from the sky were believed by figures such as Aristotle to foretell the climate of the months to come, a vital element of crop and food production. More sinisterly, they were believed to be harbingers of disaster, with astrologers thinking that the appearance of a comet in the heavens heralded a tragedy of some description. Astrologers interpreted what each comet might mean by studying its appearance and relating it to the occurrence that it seemed to embody, so a comet that glowed like fire suggested that war or violence was on the horizon.

When astrologers observed comets in relation to readings, they interpreted them in relation to the signs that they passed through. By this token, a comet passing through a sign associated with earth might suggest feminine, whilst one passing through a sign associated with the element of water could foretell devastating floods. Today, of course, we no longer fear the appearance of a comet. Modern astrologers prefer to interpret them not as a sign of impending doom, but as an indication that a major life change or new direction is on the horizon. Far preferable to an unavoidable catastrophe of devastating proportions!



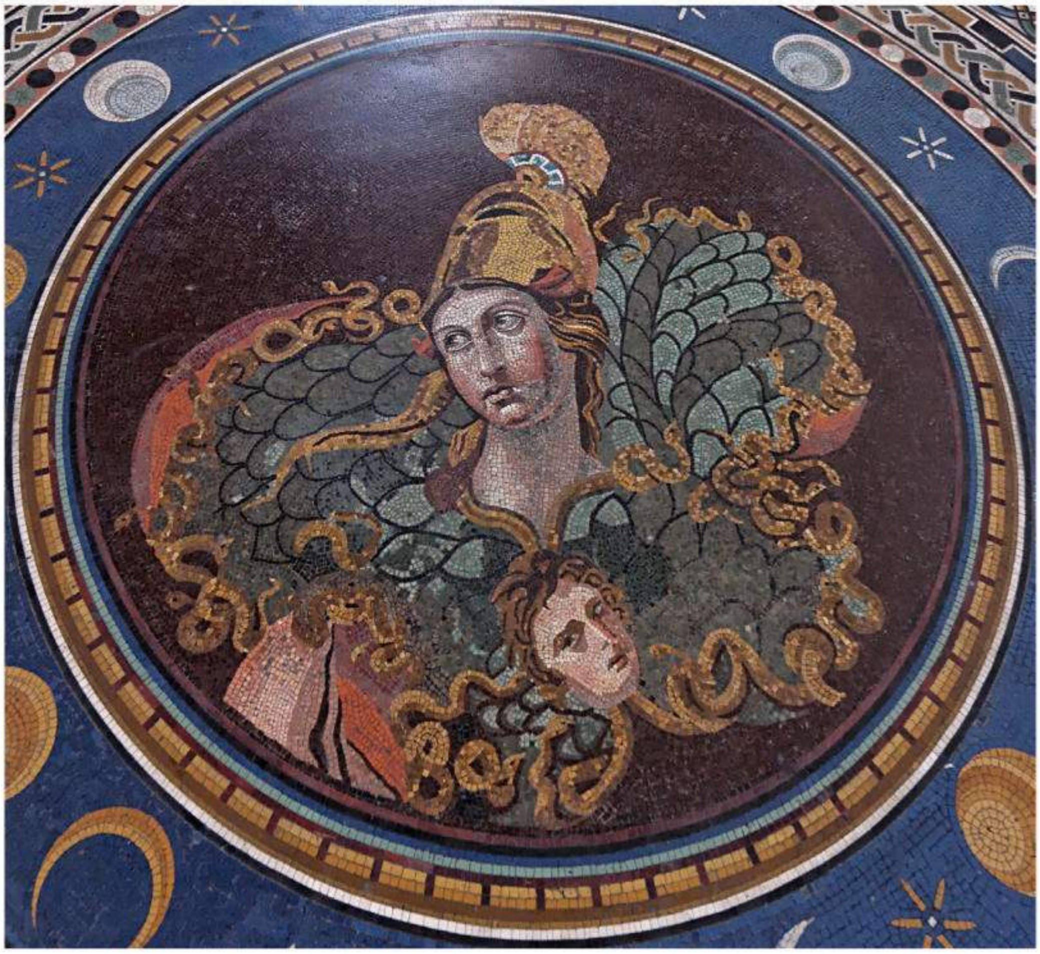
CERES

THE EARTH MOTHER

The first asteroid to be discovered, Ceres speaks of motherhood, nurture and neglect

Now classified as a dwarf planet, Ceres takes its name from the Roman goddess of the harvest, who was mother of Persephone. When Persephone was abducted, Ceres became so distraught that she neglected the Earth's crops and instead searched for her daughter. The first autumn and winter descended as famine swept the land, threatening all life. Eventually it was agreed that Persephone could return to her mother for two seasons, to allow the harvest to flourish through spring and summer, but must return to the underworld for the remaining months.

In astrology, Ceres represents the maternal bond and a nurturing soul. She is also associated with fertility and abundance, and relationships between mothers and daughters. Just as Ceres let go of Persephone, this asteroid goddess is representative of letting go, but when she is unbalanced, she can manifest as the broken-hearted mother, and is associated with ill health, control and neglect.



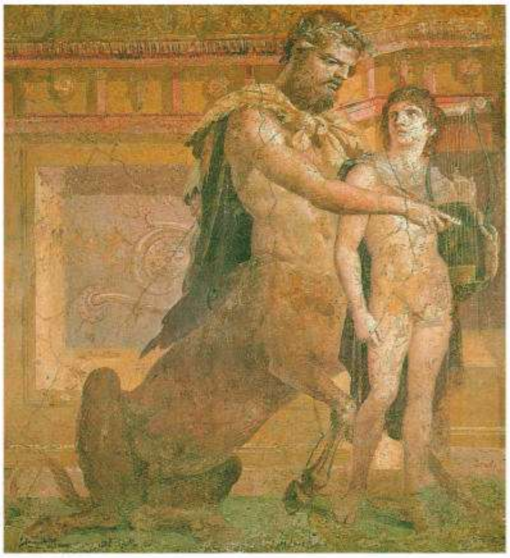
PALLAS

MOTHER OF WISDOM

The warrior Pallas is not only physically strong - she is a strategic genius too

Pallas Athena was the daughter of Jupiter, the king of the gods, and the Titan Metis. When Jupiter heard that his unborn child would be more powerful even than him, he turned the pregnant Metis into a fly and swallowed her whole. Yet her baby kept growing and burst, fully grown and fully armoured ready for war, from her father's forehead. She was, quite literally, Jupiter's brainchild.

Though she has a single-minded dedication to whatever cause she is pursuing, Pallas also symbolises wisdom, logic and justice. She is clinical and strategic, providing a balancing force against extremes of emotion. When we need to weigh up an argument and decide the most sensible way forward, or if we need to defend ourselves without resorting to anger, Pallas is there to guide us.



CHIRON

THE WOUNDED HEALER

Wisdom, personal growth and teaching combine in this dwarf planet

The centaur Chiron was known as the most just and wise of all his kind. Raised by Apollo, he eschewed the rabble-rousing behaviour of the other centaurs and concentrated his efforts on personal growth, whether physical, spiritual or cultural, and on educating others. Though a talented healer, when he was hit by a poisoned arrow, he couldn't heal himself. Doomed to eternal pain, he sacrificed his immortality for a place among the stars.

The comet Chiron is a symbol of vulnerability and the wounded places within us all. But the centaur teaches us that whatever obstacles we face, we shouldn't give up. Instead we should overcome them and learn that sometimes upheaval and pain are necessary. Just as the mythological Chiron took the step from immortality to the heavens, so too do astrologers believe that the appearance of Chiron in a chart suggests we are at a point of transition that requires us to show compassion and understanding to ourselves so that we can continue to grow. Chiron offers the opportunity to reflect on our deepest pains and allow ourselves not to be knocked down by them, but to use them to empower ourselves. In many ways, Chiron is representative of the ability to accept that we are not and will never be a finished product, but will always be a work in progress.

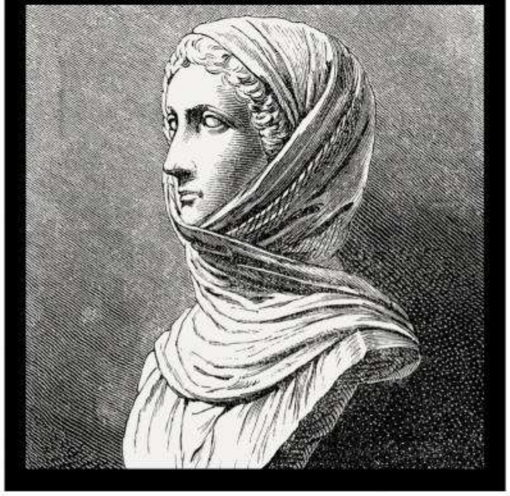
VESTA

GUARDIAN OF THE HEARTH

Vesta, the virgin goddess, is the fastest-travelling and brightest zodiac asteroid

As the sister of Jupiter, Vesta was one of the most important goddesses in ancient Rome. She rejected the romantic and sexual advances of other gods in order to remain a virgin, and she tended her brother's hearth to ensure that a fire was always burning in the grate.

Vesta has long been revered as the protector of the home and hearth, and a cult was established in her name. Romans asked Vesta to bless their newborn babies and every home had a sacred flame that burned day and night as an offering to the goddess. In keeping with a goddess who eschewed romance in favour of a domestic existence, Vesta is representative of familial devotion and domesticity. Vesta speaks of our loves and commitments. She is the symbol of dedication, focus and the things we hold most dear to our hearts.



JUNO

QUEEN OF THE GODS

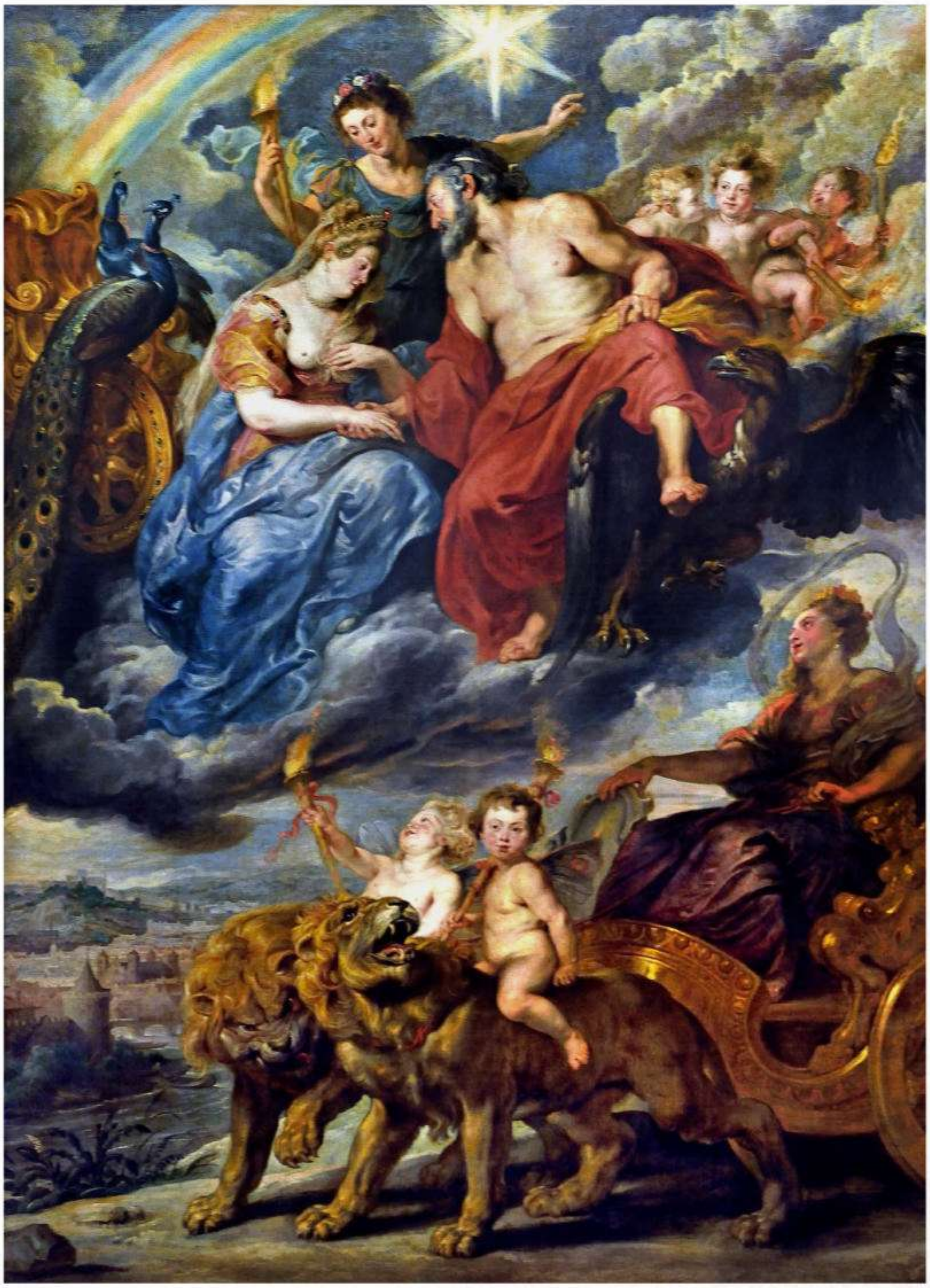
The principled Juno has a history steeped in relationships and intimacy

Juno was the queen of the gods, and the wife of the unfaithful Jupiter. Despite her loyalty and unstinting devotion to her marriage, her husband never returned it, and Juno became obsessed with watching him and taking her revenge on the spouse who had betrayed her.

She has become the archetypal scorned, embittered woman, but she was also a protector, watching over the women of Rome and their children, ensuring that they were cared for in a way that she could not always enjoy herself.

As a result, Juno is strongly associated with relationships, and the position of Juno in a chart can strongly suggest whether a relationship will be one of equals and devotion, or a bitter one of jealousy and betrayal.

Just as Juno supported her troublesome husband despite his infidelity, Juno also symbolises principles and struggling against the odds. However, she can also embody the possibility that a relationship will collapse into a struggle for one-upmanship and unhappiness.



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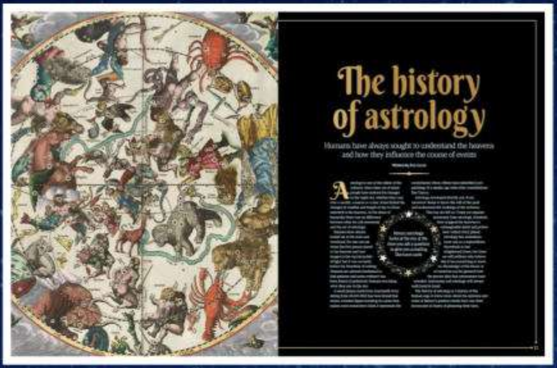


The history of astrology

Humans have always sought to understand the heavens and how they influence the course of events

ANCIENT ORIGINS

Discover astrology's roots deep in the lost civilisations of antiquity, and learn how it has evolved over the centuries

The story of the stars

We look up today and see the stars divided into the same familiar shapes as our ancestors, but how did the constellations come to be?

MYTHS & LEGENDS

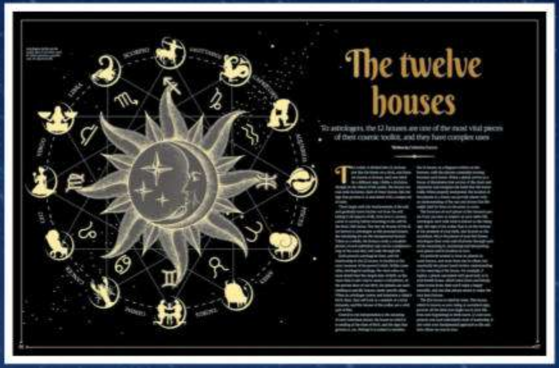
Explore the stories behind the stars and the tales that gave the constellations their names and shapes

The role of the planets

Astrology relies on a deep understanding of the motion of the heavens – and especially the planets that sweep through the Solar System

WANDERING STARS

Find out about the important role the planets play and how they're thought to influence character and augur the future



The twelve houses

To astrologers, the 12 houses are one of the most vital pieces of their cosmic toolkit, and they have complex uses

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Learn how astrologers interpret the heavens and how they assess the positions of the planets and stars in your chart

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